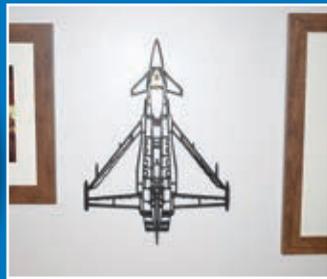


The Forces' favourite paper



3D print Typhoon wall art to win R'nR page 5



Sunny delight for Ray Davies
See R'nR page 3

ROYAL AIR FORCE

Friday, March 20, 2026
Edition No.1628

Only 99p

RAF NEWS



See pages 14-15

Colin, 105, storms UK bestseller lists

Win 'Bloody Dangerous', the story of Mossie hero's 50 WWII missions



Alpine Fab four in Nationals



See p23

Gridiron RAF Knight sinks Navy



See p24

Football Women in trophy win



See page 27

New era of threat



Simon Mander

AIR CHIEFS have warned of a new era in air power after RAF Akrotiri came under attack by an Iranian drone. And new combat systems like Tempest are vital to giving Britain a

fighting edge in future conflicts. Speaking at the Royal United Services Institute Combat Air Conference, Chief of the Air Staff ACM Harv Smyth said: "As of the last two weeks, welcome to the new era, where RAF bases are once again attacked from the air.

"The control of the air game has changed, and we must adapt and evolve quickly. Our numerical and technological advantage has waned over time, and our opponents are developing fast."
Continued on page 2



BiteSize

“We want to ensure RAF families know how and where to access support,”



Military Minds chief Robynne Batley-Mallett
See page 13

“She’s got a soft spot for men and gets herself into quite a bit of trouble,”



Mischa Barton stars in stage version of Double Indemnity
See R’n’R pages 4-5

“Wearing this shirt is about representing something bigger than yourself,”



RAF Rugby and England 7s star Flt Lt Lucy Nye
See page 25

New era of threat



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● *Continued from front page*
“They are learning through fighting and rapidly closing the technological gap. We must not be outpaced.
“Control of the air today is harder to achieve and easier to lose than at any time in modern history.”
ACM Smyth welcomed the development of the Marham-based F-35 Lightning but said its combat sophistication alone was not enough to give the Air Force a winning edge in future fights.
“The F-35 is the playmaker on the pitch but even fifth-generation capability is not the end state. The future fight will not simply be about better aircraft – it will be about systems and their seamless integration,” he added.
“The era of mass raids by highly autonomous, low-risk, long-range, stand-off attacks are now upon us.”
He said control of the air was now more vital than ever to victory on the battlefield.
“This was true in the 1940s,



PLAYMAKER: 5th-Generation F-35 crucial to UK defences

it was true in the various Middle East campaigns over the last three decades and it remains true today, as we witness in Ukraine what happens when neither side can achieve it.
“Russian air power delivered an underwhelming performance at the start of the war in 2022. They now exploit mass, developments, speed, precision and lethality,

every day, and every night, to strike at targets across the wide expanse of Ukraine,” he said.
“We must continue to develop our fourth-generation capabilities, fully exploit fifth-generation integration and quickly develop capability like Wedgetail into operational service.
“We must mature and deliver our Close Combat Attack

programmes at pace, invest in resilience across space, cyber and spectrum and we must deliver sixth-generation to maintain our competitive edge into the second half of this century.”
He said the Tempest developed as part of a multinational initiative with Italy and Japan was more than a traditional fighter.
“The Global Combat Air Programme represents the UK’s commitment to sixth-generation combat air capability. It is not simply a Typhoon replacement,” ACM Smyth said.
“Built digitally from day one, it allows for rapid upgrades and adaptability for the decades to come or for the war where your enemy can rapidly adapt to your combat edge.
“If fifth-generation gave us information advantage, sixth-generation must give us decision superiority, at scale, at pace and at range. But above all this we must train for high-end war fighting.”

This Week In History



1945 Gestapo attack

64 SQN Mosquitos attack the Gestapo HQ in the Shellhaus building in Copenhagen. One aircraft crashes into a nearby school causing heavy loss of life.

1980 Tanker strikes
HUNTERS FROM Chivenor and West Raynham launch bomb and rocket strikes on the stricken Torrey Canyon tanker which runs aground near Land’s End.



2003 Storm Shadow debut

A TORNADO GR4 makes the first operational release of the Storm Shadow long-range cruise missile during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

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

UK ramps up defence across Middle East

F-35 and Typhoon spearhead security as HMS Dragon deploys to Eastern Mediterranean



ENTER THE DRAGON: Type 45 Destroyer leaves Portsmouth; above, radar image of strike as F-35 destroys drone

UK FIGHTERS scrambled to defend **BRITISH** military bases and Middle East allies as US and Israeli air strikes continue across Iran.

Air Force F-35Bs and Typhoons took off from Qatar and Cyprus to destroy incoming drones and missiles following an earlier strike on Akrotiri.

Defence of the areas has seen the first combat strike by an RAF F-35 Lightning, which tracked and destroyed two drones in an ASRAM missile strike.

An RAF Regiment counter-drone unit neutralised drones in Iraqi airspace heading towards Coalition forces, and a 12 Sqn Typhoon shot down another directed at Qatar.

Defence Secretary John Healey said: "We are moving quickly to further reinforce our defensive presence in the Eastern Mediterranean.

"The UK's position remains clear: it will stand by its allies and take the necessary steps to defend its people and its interests."

Air Mobility transported a Royal Navy Wildcat helicopter, which had to be dismantled at RNAS Yeovilton before being loaded onto an RAF C-17 Globemaster from 99 Sqn.

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer has agreed to the US using RAF Fairford in Gloucestershire and Diego Garcia in the



DRONE BUSTERS: 99 Sqn C-17 delivers wildcat helicopters to RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus

Indian Ocean for defensive airstrikes.

But British bases in Cyprus are not being used by American bombers as part of Operation Epic Fury.

The UK has also sent four additional Typhoons from Coningsby to Qatar to support Bahraini and Emirati air defence, operating alongside the UK's joint Qatari squadron – already based in the country.

As US and Israeli strikes continue, the Type 45 Destroyer HMS Dragon

deployed to the Eastern Mediterranean to boost UK defences across the region.

The Navy vessel, equipped with Sea Viper missile systems capable of firing up to 16 missiles at different targets simultaneously, is carrying Wildcat helicopters armed with drone-busting Martlet weapons.

Mr Healey added: "We are moving quickly to further reinforce our defensive presence in the Eastern Mediterranean. HMS Dragon brings world-class air

defence capability and our Wildcat helicopters to counter the growing drone threat.

"I am deeply proud of the professionalism and bravery of our Armed Forces personnel who have, in recent days, successfully taken action across the region to protect our Allies and defend British interests."

A 99 Sqn RAF C-17 delivered more Wildcats to Akrotiri ahead of the arrival of HMS Dragon, to guard the sovereign UK base from the drone threat.

The aircraft will be supported by Navy Merlin helicopters operated by 820 Naval Air Sqn, delivering force protection with its Crowsnest radar and mission systems.

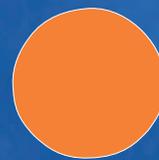
Capt James Hall added: "Merlin will complement the defensive measures provided by the Wildcat aircraft and HMS Dragon, providing a layered capability for the protection of UK Forces."



JOHN HEALEY



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High North survival test



GUNNERS BRAVED Arctic conditions and temperatures of below -20°C as they test their extreme survival skills in Norway ahead of major Nato exercises in the High North.

Operating more than 200 miles inside the Arctic Circle, 51 Sqn Gunners are honing their combat capability in the remote Evenes region of Norway before joining allies on Exercise Cold Response.

Regt Commander Gp Capt Sam Wiseman said: "The RAF Regiment personnel have demonstrated the resilience and professionalism needed to operate in one of the world's toughest environments. Their work here directly enhances Nato's ability to maintain secure and effective air operations in the High North."

The winter survival drill includes navigation, shelter-building and ice-breaking drills



COLD COMFORT: Gunners tough it out alongside Norwegian troops, *above left*

to prepare personnel for the risks of operating in one of the world's harshest environments, developing tactics to protect air assets.

Regt WO Cashmore added: "The competencies gained here – survival, mobility and protection – are vital contributions to collective defence and to our wider Nato commitments."

Troops from more than 14 nations are set to take part in Cold Response to showcase Nato's commitment to defending the High North territories.

More than 25,000 personnel including UK units will conduct cold weather training as part of Nato's multi-domain military activity, dubbed Arctic Sentry.

Also participating in the event are the United States, Denmark, Finland and Sweden, who are in the front line of defending and deterring aggression across the region.

During the drills, Nato allies will conduct joint flight operations, mass casualty drills, live-fire events, land training and amphibious missions.



BRIZE AND SHINE: Oxfordshire station showcases tech and air mobility

Winning the tech war

MILITARY LEADERS and industry bosses saw the latest RAF kit at Brize.

Frontline aircraft and drone technology were on display at the Oxfordshire airbase as the Air Force sought to demonstrate how it hopes to use high-tech to win wars.

Air and Space Combat Power Visit project officer Sqn Ldr Matt Lloyd said: "I've pulled together several elements to show what the RAF can provide to be agile, integrated and ready to fight for tomorrow."

The event strengthens links with Nato allies and international partners and collaboration with business supporting the RAF's long-term capability development.

C-17 Captain 99 Sqn Flt Lt



K9: Even RAF dogs are high-tech

Skip Collins said: "This event gives us the opportunity to talk about the global operations we are part of, and how the C-17 works together with the wider Air Mobility Force and other units like Tactical Medical Wing to provide support for Defence tasks worldwide."

RAF Middle East evacuation teams help thousands to flee

Simon Mander

OPERATIONS EXPERTS from the RAF have been deployed to the Middle East as Britons continue to flee the region in the wake of the airstrikes on Iran.

Air movements specialists have been deployed to more than five countries in the region to help coordinate military and civilian airspace.

The news comes as it emerged 63,000 people had already returned home and five charter flights have departed from the UAE and Oman, with more in the coming days.

On a visit to Saudi Arabia, Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper saw a demonstration of the UK air defence battery, deployed since 2022 and at high readiness, prepared to defend critical national infrastructure.

She said: "The situation in the Middle East remains highly volatile and our priority is the safety and security of British people, alongside supporting our partners across the region

who face continuing strikes.

"Saudi Arabia is an essential partner for the UK who have been targeted by reckless attacks by the Iranian regime, and who have supported British nationals to come home and is working to maintain energy security and supply.

"Everyone wants to stop this Iranian threat to its neighbours."

The UK's defensive military action is supporting the wider region, with four extra Typhoons, three Wildcat helicopters, a Merlin helicopter and HMS Dragon being deployed.

Missiles

Saudi Arabia, one of the UK's oldest partners in the region, has been attacked by Iranian missiles and drones at oil facilities and the US Embassy in Riyadh.

During the trip, the Foreign Secretary is expected to discuss the continuity of oil supply in the face of strikes in the Strait of Hormuz. This follows the IEA's announcement of a release of 400 million barrels from the strategic reserve.



WELL-PRACTISED: Air Movements team deploy to help evacuate civilians across the broader Middle East

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Playhouse Theatre, Weston super Mare

7.30pm Saturday 26 September

Palace Theatre, Newark

7.30pm Sunday 27 September

Cast, Doncaster

7.30pm Friday 2 October

Epsom Playhouse

7.30pm Friday 16 October

Terry O'Toole Theatre, Lincoln

2026

www.rafconcerts.uk

Bulletin



LIFE-SAVER: Rebecca Young joins military vets producing her solar blanket

Hot shot

A MILITARY veterans charity is targeting homelessness by producing a pioneering solar-powered blanket for rough sleepers designed by a 13-year-old schoolgirl.

Rebecca Young scooped a young designers' award with her concept, inspired by seeing people sleeping rough on the streets of her native Glasgow.

She beat more than 70,000 other entries in the UK Primary Engineer MacRobert Medal competition. Now the device is being manufactured by former Forces personnel on the Royal British Veterans Enterprise programme.

Rebecca said: "When I saw people sleeping outside, I wanted to design something that could help. I never imagined it would go this far. It's amazing to see my invention being produced on a wider scale and I'm so pleased it will benefit so many people."

Lossie Highland rescue scramble

Simon Mander

RAF MOUNTAIN climbers battled gale force winds and torrential rain during a 20-hour rescue mission in the Scottish Highlands.

Volunteers at Lossiemouth scrambled to support local mountain rescue teams after the man went missing on the northeastern slopes of Sgurr Fiona.

A bid to winch the stricken walker to safety on board a Coastguard helicopter was called off due to poor visibility and strong winds.

A Dundonell Mountain Rescue Team spokesman said: "The team was alerted to a well-equipped walker who'd become cragfast after taking a wrong turn while descending.

"What followed was a very long and extremely technical rescue. The team was deployed out on to the hill but due to poor visibility and strong winds were stood down.

"The hill parties then made their way up onto Sgurr Fiona, but heavy rain meant there were a couple of ice and rock falls close to where the walker was and the team moved down the hill and started again.

"RAF Lossiemouth had been called earlier and with their arrival



the hill parties started to build the first of three 100m belays to reach the stranded walker.

"Team members from the Assynt Mountain Rescue Team and Police Scotland arrived – at this point there were 30 rescuers on site from four different teams.

"The walker was reached, secured, warmed up, fed and, despite being still for some 20 hours on a ledge, they were happy to walk back to the team base, where they were checked over by a paramedic."

The rescue came just five days

after DMRT were called out to rescue three hillwalkers on the same mountain.

One of the walkers needed medical treatment but the third walker died. With assistance from Lossiemouth, the body was recovered the following day.

Vet Jayne's Invictus Voyage

Simon Mander

AN RAF Iraq veteran is to take part in a 2,000-nautical-mile adventure around the UK to support wounded, injured and sick personnel.

Former Sqn Ldr Jayne Lindley will join the Full Circle Expedition coordinated by sailing charity Turn to Starboard and delivered in partnership with Invictus Games Birmingham 2027.

It comes on the 25th anniversary of the death of a close friend and fellow Air Force Servicewoman.

She said: "For me this trip, will be a chance to look back on a 28-year career and remember some of the people I have lost. The first leg of the expedition will mark 25 years since my good friend Linda

Yarr drowned in a yacht capsizing off Australia, aged 35. I started sailing to honour her memory, and keep her memory alive."

Full Circle will see two tall ships, Spirit of Falmouth and Pellew, crewed by a rotating team of 70 veterans. The 12-week expedition visits 22 ports before returning home in June.

Throughout the crew will carry the Invictus Games flag.

Born in Hartlepool, Jayne joined the Air Force aged 19 and completed a six-year commission then left to pursue a Sport Science Degree.

She rejoined on Operation Telic in Baghdad in 2003.

She said: "Saddam Hussein was still at large, and the airfield was a high-value target for the enemy. We worked in air movements experiencing constant RPG

attacks day and night within a couple of kilometres of our position."

A highlight of Jayne's career was co-organising a Diamond Jubilee Pageant for Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip at Cosford in 2012.

But she also faced setbacks.

She added: "On a winter survival training course in 1993 I was hit by a car, rendering me unconscious for an hour, hypothermic and then confined to hospital for a week before being medically evacuated back to the UK to complete my recovery.

"I was 23 at the time of the accident and was in the running for the first RAF female bobsleigh team. I think I've never really got over that lost opportunity.

"I have also, through the Air Force, volunteered in seabird survey work and intend to utilise this and a passion for photography to capture wildlife encounters along the voyage."

The challenge is also raising £300,000 to enable Turn to Starboard to buy a second tall ship, so that the charity can support more veterans facing PTSD, physical injury, isolation, and loss of confidence.



SET FAIR: Veteran Jayne Lindley will join tall ships crew for 2,000-mile voyage around the UK. Inset left, meeting HM The Queen in 2012





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Leonardo lands £1bn rotary deal



In: AW149

Out: Puma

Simon Mander

DEFENCE CONTRACTOR Leonardo has won a £1 billion contract to build 23 new medium-lift helicopters at its Somerset base to replace the Puma.

Defence Secretary John Healey said the deal to make AW149s meant Yeovil would build military helicopters for

years to come. Earlier the company's chief executive, Roberto Cingolani, warned the factory's future was at risk – leaving thousands of workers in limbo.

The agreement secures 3,300 jobs at Yeovil and international orders could mean more than £15bn in exports over the next 10 years, the MOD said.

The factory previously built aircraft

used in WWI under the name Westland and more recently has specialised in Merlin and Wildcat helicopters.

The firm had initially put in a bid to build 44 helicopters, but this was downsized after the government's budget and requirements were reduced in 2024.

Nigel Colman, managing director of helicopters UK at Leonardo, said: "We are

committed to providing the UK Armed Forces with a world-class, medium-lift helicopter that will serve our military personnel for many years to come."

The Italian firm has sites in Edinburgh, Luton, Basildon, Bristol, Newcastle, Southampton and Lincoln, employing thousands more workers in its supply chains.

Home front defences tested

Simon Mander

DRILLS TO test the RAF's ability to defend Britain have been launched across the country.

The two-week Exercise Agile Warrior will train air and ground units at stations across the UK under contested, degraded and operationally-limited conditions.

It simulates cyber-attacks, long-range precision strike threats, and attempts to disrupt UK air operations.

Chief of the Air Staff, ACM Sir Harv Smyth, said: "We are seeing regular incursions into our sovereign waters and air space by hostile agents that do not play by our rules.

"We see regular examples of espionage and sabotage that seek to affect our economy, undermine our democracy and disrupt our very way of life.

"It's through this lens, protecting our homeland, that we prepare for Exercise Agile Warrior. What we do, and how we do it, really matters."

All military and civilian



SECURITY: 1ELS stand by as Atlas lands at Wittering.

personnel should be expected to strengthen their readiness, practise leadership in uncertainty, challenge bureaucracy and reinforce the warfighting ethos.

Participating forces will practise rapid dispersal, command and control arrangements, base

defence, and sustainment and recovery activities.

It builds upon lessons from Exercise Agile Shield and prepares for Nato's Exercise Steadfast Defender, where full-scale alliance warfighting plans will be tested.



COSFORD SPRING cleaning kicks off this month as specialist teams give the RAF Museum Midland's collection of vintage war birds a polish. Suspended from the hangar roof and operating up

to 100ft in the air, the crew from Totally Wild Access are sprucing up star attractions including the Lightning, Vulcan, Canberra, Meteor, Sabre, Hunter, Dakota and Javelin.

News



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Special delivery



CHARITY PREMIER LEAGUE: Volunteer Anna Gwilt gets a lift from Tristan Beer and Jamie Gordon. *Inset above,* Kenyan football star Musa Otieno backs the appeal

Simon Mander

A SHAWBURY-BASED soccer charity has completed its largest delivery of footie kits to Kenya.

Taking Football to Africa and Beyond collects donated items of sports kit and redistributes them to children and adults across the globe.

The appeal, organised by Sqn Ldr Mark Smales and retired Wg Cdr Neil Hope, has sent 453,569 items, including 128,356 football shirts, to 71 countries worldwide.

Sqn Ldr Smales said: "This delivery was bigger than ever, more visits, more kit."

After over a year of planning it is wonderful to have a successful trip and see the joy that football can bring to those who have very little."

On their most recent mission 16 serving, ex-military and civilians completed 49 separate deliveries in and around Nairobi and in Gilgil to take 23,408 items, including 7,834 football shirts.

The area is Africa's largest slum with over one million people living in an area of around three square kilometres with no permanent running

water or electricity supplies and no sewerage system.

In Gilgil, the team visited the Restart Centre beloved by the appeal, as Neil's daughter Charlotte volunteered there before she was killed in a car crash in which her mother Helen was seriously injured.

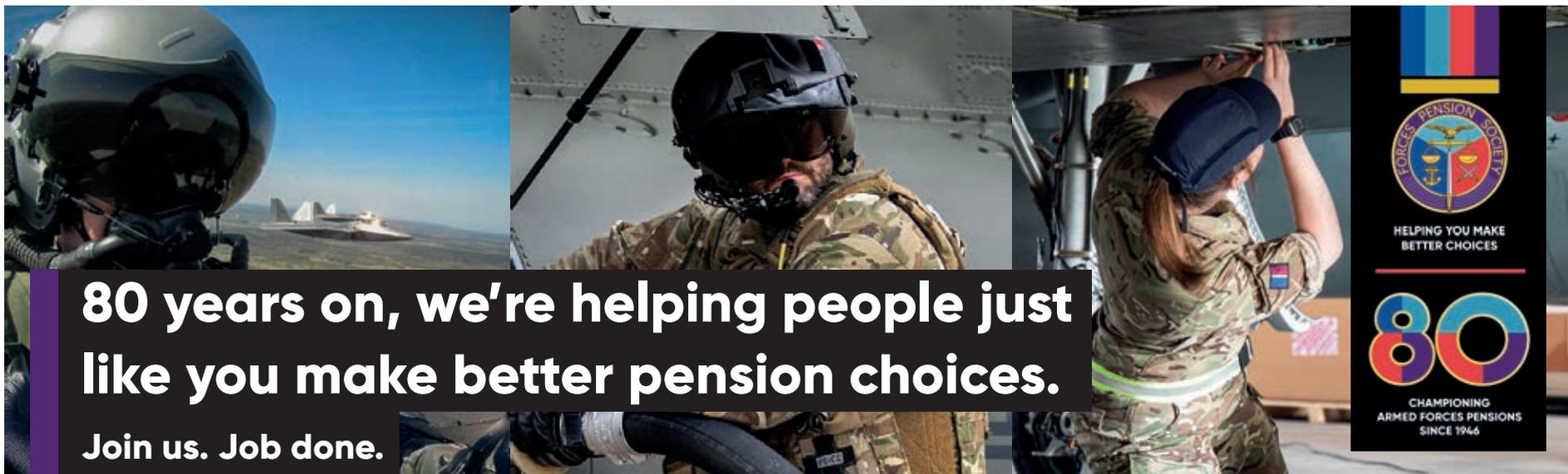
As part of the visit the team purchased essential staple foodstuffs and educational items for four orphanages.

Kits delivered included items donated by England, Premier League and EFL clubs including Leicester City, Aston Villa, Wolverhampton Wanderers, QPR and Colchester Utd.

Former Wg Cdr Hope said: "This delivery visit was superb in allowing the appeal to renew its friendships across Kenya. I am amazed that we will enter our 20th year, in May. I never expected the appeal to be as successful as it has been. I am also proud that we can visit places assisted by our 'sister' charity – Lottie's Way."



SPORTING CHANCE: Veteran charity chief Wg Cdr Hope with youngsters at the Kenyan Restart Centre



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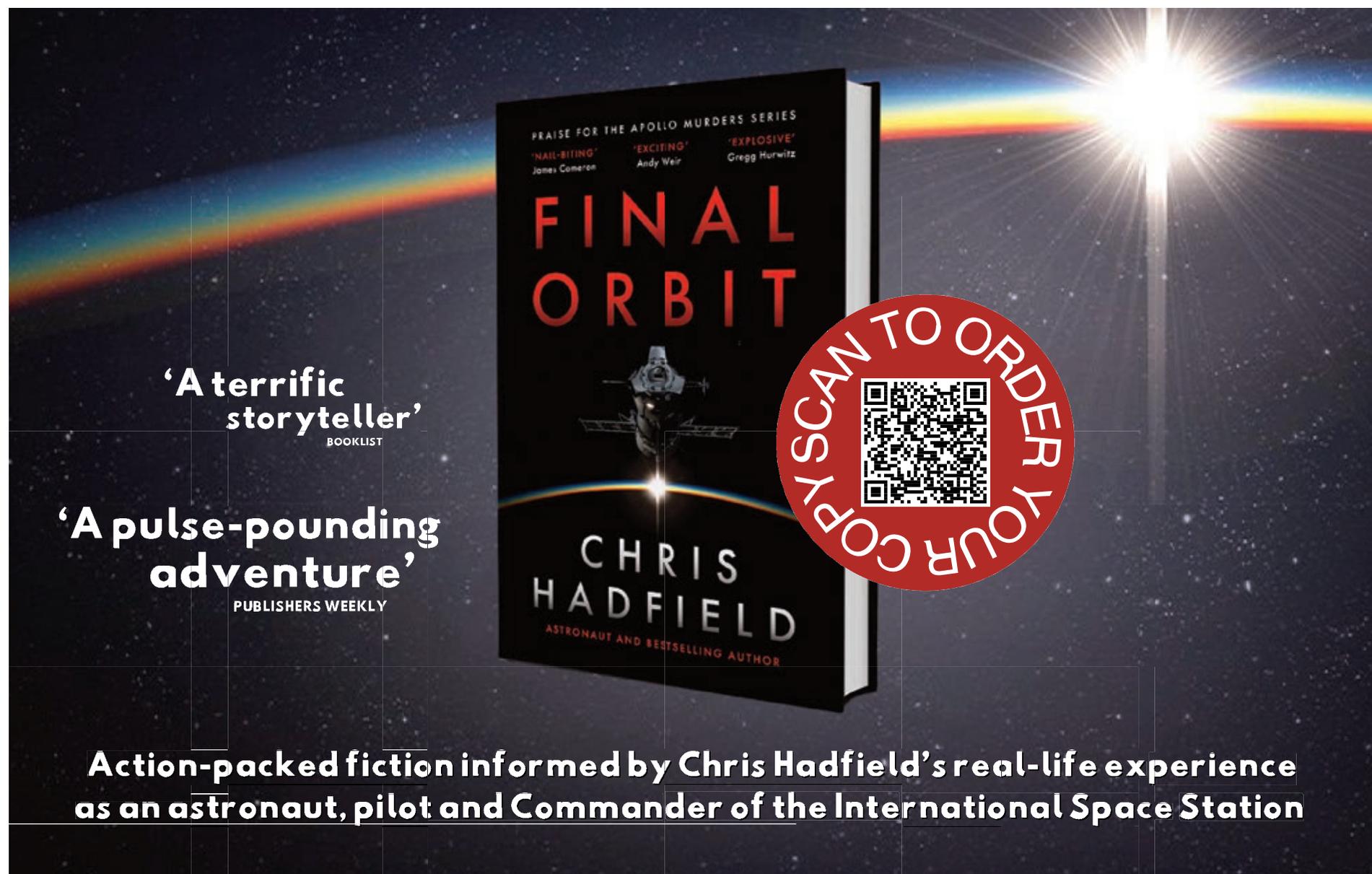
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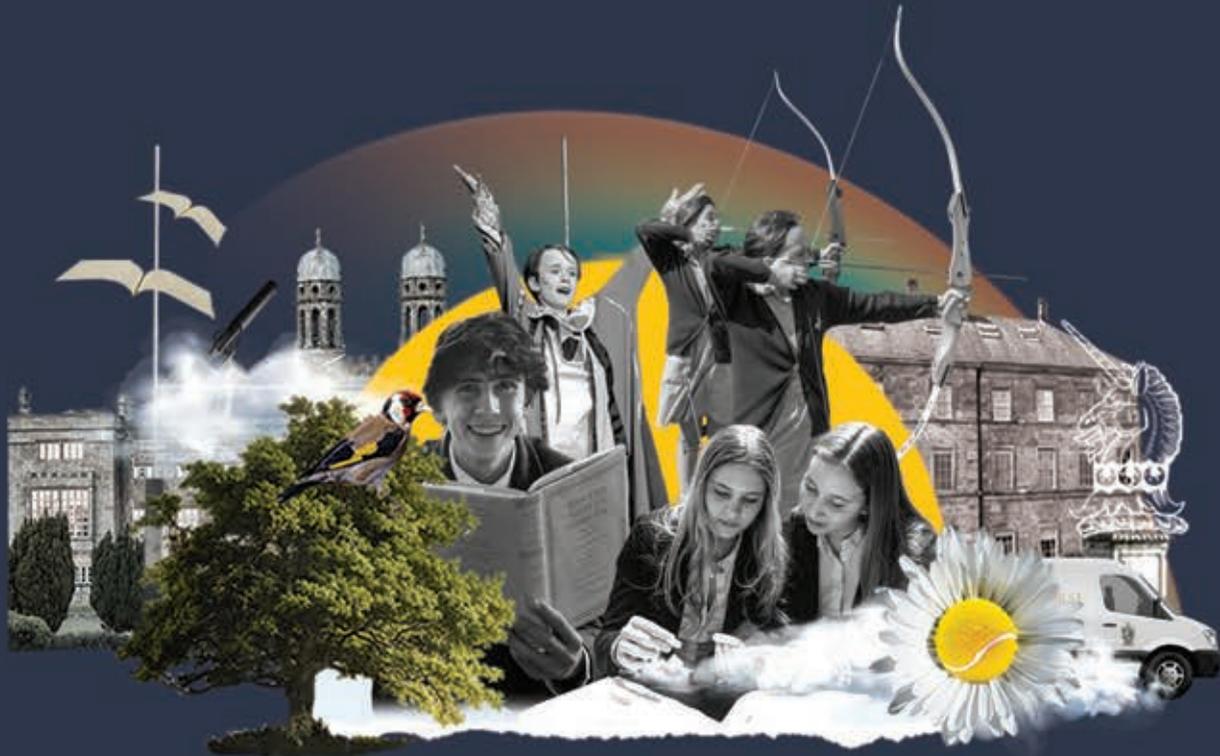


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Charity's windfall

THE RECENT Birmingham International Tattoo has raised over £4,700 for veteran's charity Royal Star & Garter.

The indoor Forces extravaganza was attended by veterans from the charity's homes in Solihull and High Wycombe.

Charity volunteers helped raise a total of £4,727 from collections, programme sales and contactless payments.



The charity provides care to veterans and their families living with disability or dementia, through its homes in Solihull, Surbiton, High Wycombe and Worthing.

Fund eases family pressure

Tracey Allen

FORCES FAMILIES are to benefit from a new mental health service aimed at easing the pressures of life in the Services.

The new Military Minds programme, financed by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund, hopes to give family members a forum to discuss their problems with staff with military experience who

can offer practical support.

Military Mind's chief Robynne Batley-Mallett said: "Frequent moving, stress around deployment, loneliness – there's a lot to contend with when you're living with a partner, child or parent in the Royal Air Force and it's not uncommon for military families to need some extra support."



CHIEF: Batley-Mallett

"With the current situation

in the Middle East creating additional uncertainty for many serving personnel, anxiety may feel especially high for military families right now.

"We want to ensure that RAF families know how and where to access that support when they need it.

"Military Minds is integral to this, so we're incredibly pleased to be working with the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to provide this service and help promote better mental health amongst the military community."

Bulletin



Nominate your hero

Staff Reporter

NOMINATIONS ARE open for the annual Women in Defence Awards celebrating the achievements of female personnel across the Force, the Civil Service and the aerospace industry.

This year's event will present 11 awards honouring individuals and teams who have made an outstanding contribution to UK Defence.

Organiser Angela Owen said: "Every year the judges are staggered and humbled by the courage and determination of those nominated and it's a tough decision to select the overall winners.

"We're looking forward to receiving many more excellent nominations this year."

The event takes place in November.

● For more details and to make a nomination go to: womenindefenceuk.com.



HIDE AND SEEK: 20 Sqn crews are operating over the Ionian Sea in latest NATO maritime surveillance exercise, Dynamic Manta

Staff Reporter

Sigonella, Sicily

UK POSEIDON surveillance crews launched sub-hunting training missions in Southern Europe during Nato's largest maritime warfare exercise, Dynamic Manta.

Operating from Sigonella Naval Air Station in Sicily, RAF Lossiemouth P-8 Poseidon aircraft deployed sonobuoys and Electronic Signal Underwater Sound devices to simulate airborne attacks on submarines during high stakes 'hide and seek' sorties.

The largest Nato exercise of its kind, the drill also tests Allied sub crews and develops diversion

tactics to avoid enemy aircraft and surface vessels.

It also marks the debut of Germany's new Poseidon P-8, which replaces the P-3 Orion, boosting Nato's fleet as the Royal Canadian Air Force prepares to take delivery of its own P-8s.

A spokesman said: "It is hide and seek in the Ionian Sea – mission scenarios see crews given brief intelligence to begin their sub-surface search.

"From there they must collaborate with partner vessels to locate the target whilst also evading detection by the 'adversary'.

"Aircrew utilise all equipment at their disposal including the sonobuoys which are dispensed



from the aircraft into the ocean that will listen for sub-surface movement.

"This is back-to-back Sigonella deployments for the Poseidon crews as they have just concluded JEDI (Joint Exploration and

Discussion of Initiatives) at the same naval air station.

"JEDI Symposiums focus on ensuring cohesive strategies and interoperability for all nations operating the Poseidon."

Feature Last surviving RAF Mosquito flyer's story

DFC Mossie pilot of 50 daring bombings

BLO MIAF

AT 105, Colin Bell is the last surviving RAF Mosquito pilot. He is also the publishing world's oldest known debut author.

His candid account of his 50 bombing raids with 608 Sqn, simply titled *Bloody Dangerous*, released this month is flying off the shelves into the bestseller list and continues to climb.

Born in 1921, Colin grew up between the wars and joined the RAF in 1940. He trained in America, and after a stint as an instructor after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, returned to Britain in 1943.

Months later he joined 608 Sqn at RAF Downham Market in Norfolk, an elite unit whose mission was to conduct raids on high-value targets in Germany.

With its ability to strike at the heart of the Nazi war machine in the regime's own back yard, the Mosquito was the world's fastest operational aircraft until the introduction of the jet-powered ME 262. It was also a highly-prized target for the Luftwaffe. Downing one of the RAF's 'wooden wonders' earned German pilots a tally of two kills.

Colin's latest mission is to celebrate what he claims is the most under-estimated aircraft in WWII – and to pass on his inspiring message to younger generations. He said: "A lot has been written about the Spitfire and the Lancaster and rightly so. But I had the honour and privilege of flying the best aircraft in WWII, yet astonishingly very little has ever been written about it.

"It was an aircraft that could do anything the Spitfire could do. But it has the advantage of two Merlin engines not just one. As the Americans would say 'Game Over'.

"It still seems incredible that you could create something so strong and durable from a mixture of wood and glue that could carry a pair of Rolls-Royce Merlin engines producing upwards of 1,300 horsepower each. Yet it worked brilliantly. It was like flying a Ferrari.

"I think we are sadly in need of the understanding that Defence must be our nation's top priority and I hope in part during the writing of the book that this message comes through."

Writing in the book he adds: "I think it's worth recalling now as it's important to remind ourselves what we were fighting for during the Second World War.

"You have to stand up to bullies. Despots attack weak nations and democracies, and it feels now that those same evil forces are abroad once again."

Miscalculation

A survivor of 50 bombing missions, including 13 on Berlin, Colin (*below*) admits he very nearly didn't survive his first raid – an attack on Hanover.

The 23-year-old combat rookie admits the terror of a German onslaught after a navigation miscalculation put his crew over a naval base overwhelmed him.

He describes the incident in the book: "Our aeroplane shuddered as a shell detonated nearby and next it was my turn to make an error. Panicking, I slammed the throttle open and threw us into a vertical dive. That got us out of the searchlight's beam, so I could see again, but now the earth was hurtling towards us at colossal speed.

"Closing the throttle, I tried to ease back on the control

column. It didn't move. Our speed and rate of descent were increasing. I pulled hard on the stick with all my strength. Still nothing. It was a question of which would come first: the plane breaking up, or hitting the ground?"

"The roar of the slipstream filled the cockpit. Instinctively, I reached for the trim wheel, which fine-tuned the position of the nose. Winding it back as far as I could, I hauled again on the stick. Slowly and gratefully, we came back into level flight."

Colin added: "In those circumstances fear is a killer. I know it nearly brought my role on operations to an abrupt end. Over further missions we developed a survival know-

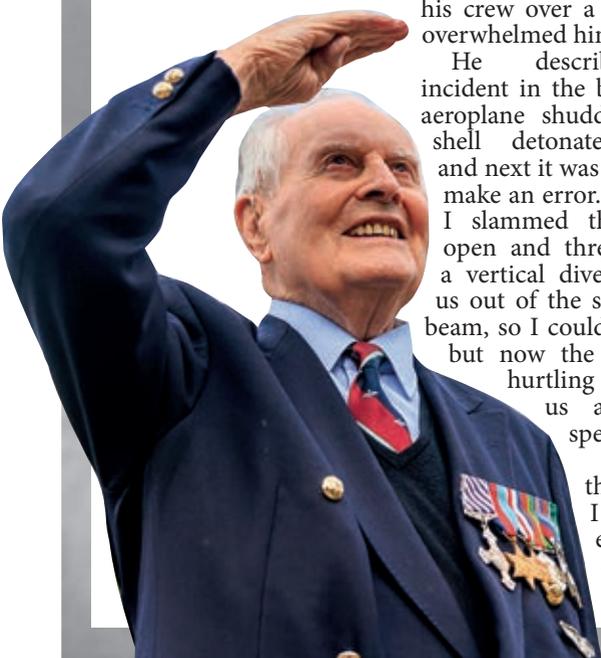
how. The things that caused that level of panic no longer got to me in the same way. It was always hairy but not so bad that it caused that kind of panic reaction."

The casualty rate for the RAF's Mosquito crews was one-in-four. During his 50 raids Colin suffered engine failures, fuel starvation, fatal ice, numerous hits to his aircraft and on one occasion an explosion so close shrapnel peppered his parachute and burnt his flying suit.

The arrival of the Me-262 heightened the threat facing the Mosquito crews. One of Colin's many escapes came when he faced down the Nazi's pioneering jet-powered fighter.



COLIN BELL:
New book



ng raids becomes a bestseller at 105

BLOODY DANGEROUS



YOUNG AVIATOR: Colin Bell flew 50 missions over Germany during the Second World War and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross



WOODEN WONDER: RAF Mosquito

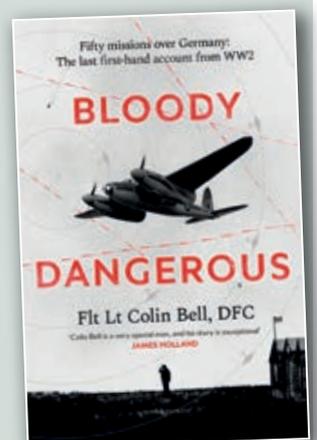
Win the book

WE HAVE copies of bestseller *Bloody Dangerous* up for grabs. For your chance to win one, tell us:

Of which elite Pathfinder squadron was Colin a member?

Email your answer, marked Colin Bell book competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by April 10.

Please note: It is a condition of entry to RAF News competitions that entrants provide their postal address so that, if



you are a winner, your prize can be posted to you. If entries do not include postal addresses they will not be considered.

He said: "Prop fighters weren't too much of a problem for us, we could avoid them because they just didn't have the speed. All escapes are lucky but the one I really remember is being chased around the sky by the German jet fighter. It had an extra 100mph on us but I managed to get away from him. I heard later that a number of Mosquitos were shot down by their night-fighters."

Colin was awarded the DFC after completing 35 operations and went on to take part in a further 13 high-stakes attacks on the German capital. "Those were the most dangerous," he added.

After the war he forged a successful career as a

chartered surveyor. But the RAF remained close to his heart. He was a driving force in the campaign to honour the heroes of Bomber Command with the building of the Memorial in Green Park in London in 2012.

He has also championed the cause and raised funds for RAF welfare organisations, in typical style. He earned a place in the Guinness Book of Records with a daredevil 300ft abseiling stunt down the 17-storey Royal London Hospital, in 2024. That was a bit challenging at 103," he admitted.

For today's RAF crews he reluctantly offers a few words of wisdom. "It would be presumptuous to offer

today's pilots any advice as things are so different now but if I had to, it would be the advice all instructors give. 'Always be on your guard, be bold in your response to the threat and don't take any unnecessary risks.'"

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

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

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

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

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

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

“There were too many bad memories of previous tours. I didn’t tell anyone and kept it hidden.”

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

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

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

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

She was airlifted to a UK mental health facility.

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

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

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

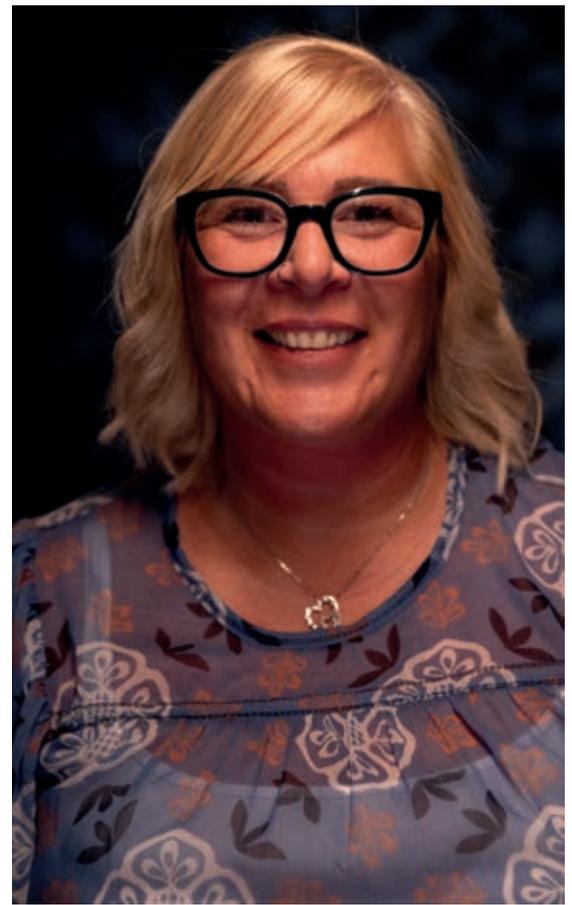
For years, Caroline struggled, but then she found hope in an unexpected way: an invitation to a Help for Heroes Christmas party.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Her message to other veterans still fighting for peace?

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

“When you do – you’ll feel it. That moment of pride. That freedom. That growth. And that’s everything.”

Long March survivor Harry owed life to German medic



BOMBER BOY: Flt Sgt Harry Winter

FLT SGT Harry Winter, who has died aged 103, was shot down over Germany and badly injured and believed that he owed his life to the kindness of a German medical orderly.

He joined the RAF in 1941 and trained as a wireless operator before completing his conversion to the Halifax bomber and his posting to 427 (RCAF) Squadron. He was one of two Englishmen in the crew. They flew their first mission on September 15, when they attacked the Dunlop rubber factory at Montlucon in central France.

They took off on the night of October 22/23, 1943 to attack Kassel. Flying in the second wave, the German night fighters had been fully alerted and were active when Winter and his crew arrived over the target. Shortly after dropping the bombs, they were attacked by an enemy fighter from behind and a fire broke out in the bomber's wing. The pilot ordered the crew to bale out. Four of the crew survived but the American-born pilot and the two gunners perished in the crash.

The raid on Kassel destroyed most of the old town and was the most devastating since the "firestorm" raid on Hamburg earlier in the year. The railway system and its installations were severely damaged and three aircraft factories making the V-1 flying bombs were also seriously damaged. This had a major effect upon the eventual opening and scale of the V-1 campaign against England.

Bomber Command paid a high price with the loss of



SPECIAL DAY: Harry Winter celebrates with wife Josie on the occasion of her 100th birthday, last year

43 bombers (7.6 per cent of the force). It was particularly disastrous for 427 Sqn, who lost four Halifax bombers. Only four of the 28 aircrew survived to become prisoners of war.

Gunter Arf

Winter landed in a tree and broke his femur and lay unconscious all night. Found by farmers in the morning, he was taken to a local hospital, where his leg was treated. He was hospitalised for seven months.

When fit enough to travel, a young German medical orderly, Gunter Arf, arrived to escort him on a train to a Luftwaffe interrogation centre. En route, Winter was threatened by an

armed soldier, but the medical orderly sought help from another more senior soldier who apprehended the assailant and Winter reached the centre safely.

After a brief interrogation, he was sent to Stalag Luft VII at Bankau in Silesia to join other Air Force prisoners. In January 1945, with the Russians advancing from the east, the 1,565 prisoners began a forced march to the west in bitterly cold weather, the most severe for many years. After two weeks on the move, they finally boarded a train and were taken to a camp at Luckenwalde south of Berlin on February 4 to join 20,000 other prisoners.

Conditions were desperate and it was not until April 22 that the camp was liberated by the

Soviet Army. By early May he was back at his home in Cardiff and was released from the RAF the following year.

Of the "Long March", Winter commented in later years, "I just looked at the man in front of me. I walked and walked and kept pace with him. I never lost hope. I thought I would get home sometime. I had a bit of energy, and I used it to survive."

Friendship

Winter had given his German rescuer his name and address and told him: "I'd like to speak to you after the war is over," which he was able to do. They were of a similar age, both married and had children and they struck up a

friendship that endured with the two families enjoying holidays together many times.

For his 100th birthday, Harry flew in a Spitfire from Biggin Hill. In 2025 he became involved in the *Daily Telegraph* "The Not Forgotten" Christmas Charity. He went to Buckingham Palace for the charity's annual garden party and was also a guest of honour at the Westminster Abbey National Service of Remembrance, marking the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

He was able to celebrate his wife's 100th birthday in 2025 and later in the year in an interview with the *Daily Telegraph* he said: "I'm not worried about dying. I did my duty."

Indeed, he did.

“I'm not worried about dying. I did my duty”



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RAF News
The official voice of the Royal Air Force

By Tracey Allen

IWM Exhibition **Feature**

LONDON AT WAR

How the artists and people of the capital experienced and captured the changes to their city brought about by the Second World War

A NEW exhibition telling the story of profound and rapid changes to London during World War II – as seen through the eyes of artists and the people who lived there – has just opened at the Imperial War Museum.

Beauty and Destruction: Wartime London in Art is on at the IWM until November 1 and admission is free. A spokesperson for the Museum said: “The exhibition offers something for everyone who lives in, visits or loves London, and its defiant wartime history.

“With subjects ranging from the iconic resilience of St Paul’s Cathedral to the devastation of the Docklands, *Beauty and Destruction* invites visitors to experience the breadth of wartime London’s transformation. The exhibition takes visitors on a journey through the vast scale of damage inflicted during WWII, but also reveals personal, intimate moments of Londoners’ resilience and humanity.

“The show harnesses the power

of IWM’s extensive and world-class art collection, bringing together over 45 outstanding paintings and drawings alongside photographs, film, objects and oral histories.”

Rebecca Newell, Head of Art at IWM, said: “IWM’s art collection offers an exceptional eyewitness testimony to the impact of the Second World War on London and its people – a story of rapid cultural and social change, and a transformed city.

“*Beauty and Destruction* showcases some of IWM’s most important works of art and the unique role of artists in shaping our visual memory of war. Many of the artworks in this exhibition were made as part of the official war artist scheme, which aimed to keep artists usefully employed during the war, stop them from being killed in combat duty and provide a vivid and lasting record for generations to come. Their legacy shows a city on the edge, but also reveals an uplifting story of hope, creativity and humanity in the face of unprecedented change.”



Henry Carr, St Clement Dane's Church on Fire after being Bombed, 1941. On display in *Beauty and Destruction: Wartime London in Art* (March 20 to November 1, 2026) © IWM. Inset, photograph of the blaze

She added: “The exhibition will provide a rich and thought-provoking experience for visitors of all ages.”

Beauty and Destruction features works by well-known

artists including Eliot Hodgkin, Graham Sutherland, Henry Carr, Evelyn Dunbar, Duncan Grant and Edward Ardizzone, alongside lesser-known artists who were compelled or commissioned to document the destruction and resilience of the city.

Many of the commissioned artists were employed by the War Artists’ Advisory Committee (WAAC), established by The Ministry of Information in 1939 and chaired by Sir Kenneth Clark, then Director of the National Gallery.

Dunbar produced 40 works in total that were acquired by the WAAC. She worked for the Committee throughout most of WWII and, from 1943, had several stints as a full-time salaried artist, which was a unique position for a female artist.

The spokesperson explained: “London was a major target for German bombers in WWII, and war became a feature of everyday life. Londoners witnessed a transformation of the city, with bombing causing widespread damage to buildings, infrastructure and landmarks, most notably during the intense period of the Blitz. Using four themes to tell this story – Travel, Thames, Street and Shelter – *Beauty and Destruction* will transport visitors to a London that will feel both familiar and alien.”



Charles Ginner, Deserted Houses, Pimlico, 1943 © IWM

The voices of those who experienced London during WWII are featured throughout the exhibition, including Dame Vera Lynn and a schoolchild. Letters, toys and other salvaged objects bring personal stories to life, illuminating the joy and hope of wartime weddings, to the hardship of losing one’s home during the Blitz.

A *Beauty and Destruction* family trail has been designed to help younger visitors engage with and understand the stories being told, the spokesperson added.

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



Evelyn Dunbar, Standing-by on Train 21: One of the Civilian Evacuation trains ready to evacuate casualties at short notice, 1941 © IWM

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Armed Forces' Health Support

Navigator witnessed H-bomb test in Pacific



GP CAPT RICHARD DIXON, who has died aged 93, saw service in the Canal Zone and was twice deployed to Christmas Island in a support role for the testing of Britain's first thermonuclear bomb (H-bomb) in 1957.

He joined the RAF in 1950 on a short service commission and trained as a navigator. After completing his training, he was posted to the Canal Zone at a time of increasing tension. He flew in Valetta transport aircraft. An unusual task was to provide assistance to the Iraqi government following devastating floods in the country in 1954. He was part of a small detachment that flew to RAF Habbaniya, near Baghdad, to drop food supplies and other materials to the local populations. The detachment of some 75 personnel was awarded the Iraq Flood Medal by the Iraqi Government, a unique medal later approved for wear by HM The Queen.

On return to the UK, Dixon flew in Coastal Command on maritime reconnaissance missions, first on the US-built Lockheed Neptune with 210 Sqn then the Shackleton with 206 Sqn, based in Cornwall. It was during this time that he was detached to Christmas Island.

Previous testing of Britain's atomic bomb had been in Australia, but an alternative location had to be found for the



SHORTS: Dixon, *second right*, with one of the Belfasts he helped to bring into service

next stage of testing. Christmas Island, the largest coral atoll in the Pacific, was chosen as the main base with Malden Island, some 400 miles south, as the instrumentation island for the weapon drop.

The enterprise was the largest joint service operation since World War II, with every item of equipment required for the operation (Operation Grapple) having to be transported to the barren island.

Dixon was one of four operations officers charged with working up the newly-constructed airfield and controlling air movements of the many RAF aircraft involved.

These involved the three Valiant V-bombers tasked with dropping the weapon, Canberra aircraft to photograph the detonations and some to fly through the atomic cloud to collect dust samples. Shackleton maritime patrol aircraft patrolled the area to ensure safety and a small transport and search and rescue detachment was also deployed. This force generated a significant number of airfield movements.

Op Grapple consisted of three tests, all airbursts, dropped from 30,000 feet with the weapon exploding at 8,000 feet. For those on Christmas Island, there was nothing to see of the tests 400 miles away. However, on

the third test, Dixon was able to accompany the scientists in a Dakota to observe the drop. At the moment of detonation of the weapon, the interior of the aircraft was darkened, and all the passengers had to turn away with eyes closed until the mushroom cloud had developed.

On his return he attended the year-long specialist navigation course. He was then seconded to Short Brothers in Northern Ireland who were developing the heavy-lift strategic transport aircraft, the Short Belfast. When the only RAF squadron to operate the Belfast entered service with 53 Sqn at RAF Brize Norton, he was appointed as a flight commander.

He flew long-range routes which included recovering equipment and personnel from RAF Khormaksar during the British withdrawal from Aden in November 1967. During a flight to Singapore the following year, his aircraft was diverted to Saigon to deliver essential supplies to the British Embassy needed to save many orphan children as the Viet Cong advanced on the city.

He later served at the

headquarters of the Far East Air Force in Singapore before taking command of the operations wing at RAF Lyneham, the home of four Hercules tactical transport squadrons. He always considered this to be the most rewarding appointment of his RAF service. At the end of his tour, he was appointed OBE.

Following a staff tour at HQ Strike Command, he was appointed to command RAF Northolt on the outskirts of London, where the RAF's VIP aircraft fleet was based for use by the Royal Family, government officials and foreign dignitaries. He went on to spend six months in command of British Forces on the crucial staging post at Ascension Island in the immediate aftermath of the Falklands War.

His final appointment was in the headquarters of NATO in Brussels, before retiring in September 1987. He then became the Secretary at the RAF Staff College, an appointment he held until finally retiring in December 1996 after 47 years' service with the Crown.



HONESTY IS a rare thing in the modern world, particularly when it comes to motor vehicles. You see, many models pretend to be something they're not. Take the current crossover market, where you're constantly being sold a hypothetical Swiss-Army knife. 'It's a family car, a Sport Utility Vehicle and a city car, all rolled into one'.

To a smaller degree, the pick-up market can be played the same way, with plush sports wagons being the new lifestyle choice for many. The thing is, would you really want to take your posh family wagon to do some serious mud-plugging, hurl an oily engine rebuild on the tail, or recover a dead sheep from the bottom dingle?

That's where the Isuzu D-Max Utility dominates. It's a vehicle for people who do, a vehicle for productivity and action. It's also great value because it's above the required 1,000kg payload threshold that enables you to classify it as a commercial vehicle. That means it avoids a lot of tax.

Now, don't get me started on the current government's obsession with hiking tax, but the double-cab D-Max will soon become much more expensive, targeted by a new pick-up truck tax raid. Stick to the single cab, with its small, dicky rear seats, however, and you'll continue to avoid the Chancellor's evil clutches. You didn't hear that from me, right?

All versions continue to undercut the equivalent spec competition too.

Exterior

It's a pick-up truck and it looks like a, er, pick-up truck. It comes with 16-inch steel wheels and sturdy black exterior trim. You can even choose different colours. There's white, silver, or grey paintwork on offer.

It basically does what it says on the tin and means business. No messing. The nose is a more styled affair than Isuzus of old though and it has a nice curve to the front pillars. The profile has a sleeker stance than you might expect.

The single-cab gives you a longer flat-bed at the back, but all bed sizes can take a standard pallet, lengthways between the wheel-arches. There are four tie-down hoops in the bed, one

Maximum honesty



A FLOODY MARVEL: The rugged D-Max can cope with up to 800mm of water

for each corner, and it can take a payload that rivals the best in class. All versions are capable of carrying more than 1,000kg in the bed and towing 3,500kg, although not at the same time, for legal reasons.

Interior

The cabin is well laid out, with a good driving position. I'd prefer more reach adjustment from the steering wheel, but that's just me being picky. Everything else in here feels nicely placed and the driver's seat comes with a lumbar support! I know, right?

Beyond this, the Utility is pure workhorse, in a brilliant sense. The thick rubber mats can easily be swilled down with a hose and the seats come with removable covers that, again, are clean with a single rinse. Mucking out livestock? Covered in brick dust? No bother,

this is the perfect vehicle.

There's plenty of space for both front and rear-seat passengers. The latest generation D-Max offers passengers 20mm more shoulder room than its predecessor, higher hip points and more reclined rear seats. Storage is up too, with two gloveboxes and an extra dash-top mini glovebox for good measure.

Double cabs get eight grab handles, 10 cupholders and a pheasant in a pair tree. Family hunting trips should be a doddle (probably why it's now being targeted for tax).

You get an eight-inch touchscreen, with wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto as standard. The graphics are sharp and the system is generally quick to respond. There's also DAB radio and air con across the range.

The buttons have a satisfyingly robust feel and everything

looks very well bolted together, indestructible, almost.

On the Road

The D-Max gets off the mark quickly enough and develops enough 'grunt' in the mid-range to haul a hefty freight train. It only really starts to run out of steam at higher motorway speeds, at which point you invest a good amount of time winding it up for rapid overtakes.

The four-cylinder diesel rattles away like a tractor, but it's good for 162bhp and 266lb ft of torque. 0-62mph is achieved in 12.7 seconds and it will top-out at 112mph. Fuel economy figures come in at around 33mpg, depending on what you're hauling.

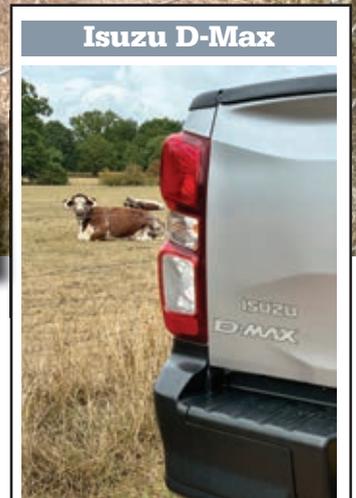
The D-Max's ride is much more sophisticated than you'd find in pick-ups of old and better too than the suspension fitted to the previous-generation, by some way. It still bounces along, without any weight on the bed, but it's a proper pick-up... Deal with it!

Off road

Awesome! Nuff said.

The suspension is well tuned and the D-Max feels perfectly at home, clambering over mountains, or navigating deeply-rutted terrain. There's not much that will get in its way, thanks to lots of suspension movement. This keeps the wheels on the ground and gainfully employed providing traction.

A lockable rear differential helps too in the thick. To



- Pros**
- Practical and solid
 - Simple interior layout
 - Good payload ratings
 - A wagon for those who do stuff

- Cons**
- Tractor-level noise
 - Bob the Builder image
 - Utility spec won't suit everyone

Verdict
THE 2026 Isuzu D-Max Utility impresses with its generous 5-year warranty and holds its own against stiff segment competition. There are faster, posher pick-ups out there, including its Arctic Truck siblings, but if you want the toughest of automotive buddies to help you with all the stuff that life throws at you, this one takes some beating.

complement this, Isuzu has added a new Rough Terrain mode, which makes scaling steep muddy slopes feel unnaturally easy. It's effectively an uber aggressive traction control.

The D-Max's maximum wading depth is 800mm. It loves a good paddle, this thing.

Sport

ALPINE

A slippery slope for family relationships

Ciara shows dad Leigh who's boss on snow

Daniel Abrahams

IT WAS a family affair at the recent Alpine Luge Championships for Sgt Leigh Horton and daughter AS1 Ciara Horton in Lusen, Italy.

The week-long event saw heated battle for the two main races: Novice Champs and overall RAF Champs.

Alongside these, AS1 Horton was the fastest in her two-horse race against dad Leigh down the demanding Jaufental track.

Sgt Paul Smith, a full-time Reservist based at St Mawgan, took first place in the Novice category despite never having tried the sport before. AS1 Connor Robertson was second and Fg Off Jack Eccleston third, after several days of training with expert guidance from Team GB members.

Smith said: "This whole experience has been a privilege, particularly training alongside GB athletes and working within



TOP THREE: RAF Champ overall winners

a supportive team environment.

"Alpine Luge is more about competing with yourself than others and the desire to

improve your times. Ultimately, it is about trying to achieve the perfect run."

Race two for the overall title, saw riders make three runs, with Sgt Dex Unwin retaining first place, and Cpl Sam Hall and Cpl Thomas Johnson completing the podium.

Sgt Chelsea Medlock, deputy team manager and Alpine luge coach, said: "It was another successful championships, with novice and advanced sliders producing some of the fastest times we've seen in their categories.

"Alpine luge is a demanding sport, so to see the progress across the week was fantastic. By race day, the standard really showed the commitment and hard work from both the athletes and the coaching team."

Rounding out the action, experienced luge rider, AS1 Ciara Horton – who was marking her third Championships – raced her debutant father Leigh.



EVERY LUGER WINS: Experienced rider Ciara with novice slider Leigh at the Championships

The Lossiemouth duo's race started with Sgt Horton being given a 15-second head start, but using all her experience, AS1 Horton produced a Personal Best time of one minute seven seconds to win the bragging rights until next year's championships.

After the race, Sgt Horton said: "She's far better than me, but there's still a bit of competition between us."

The Fantastic Four



A FANTASTIC four of RAF snowboarding will take to the slopes of Mayrhofen in Austria after winning selection for the prestigious National Championships.

Women's team captain Cpl Natalie Fields will lead the charge, joined by veteran boarder Sqn Ldr Patrick Morris, Fg Off Sam Brown and Cpl Charlotte Wolverson, all competing as part of

a UKAF team at the week-long event at the end of the month.

Fields, pictured, said: "It's always a special moment being selected to represent the whole of the Armed Forces at such a prestigious event for our sport.

"Some of the young riders we'll be competing against are the up-and-coming riders for Team GB, so I can't

wait to get another week or so on snow.

"Fingers crossed the full team get plenty of podiums across the board of age ranges."

Morris will be appearing at his fifth Brits, while Brown and Fields will be in their third year, with Wolverson making her debut.

RAF Snowboard chair Wg Cdr Nicola Duncan said: "I'm super proud of what

RAF Snowboarding has achieved over the last 12 months and the selection of these four riders is the combination of that hard work and commitment they have shown to the sport over the season. To represent the RAF and the UKAF at the Brits is no small feat."

RAF men's team captain Cpl Daz Manning and Sgt Bryany Lowe will be reserves.

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

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

Knight in shining armour

Elliott sinks the Navy in Inter-Service opener

Daniel Abrahams

AS1(T) ELLIOTT Knight scored four touchdowns to cap a dominant RAF Mustangs 39-19 win over the Royal Navy and kickstart this year's IS championship.

The win at Tilsley Park in Abingdon also earned the aviator Great Britain selection for both the contact and flag sides.

Assistant head coach Chf Tech Paul Wakeford said: "It was a good game. The Navy came out strong, but we felt we could sustain their attacks, although the game was kept close throughout the first quarter. We kept pressing and stuck to our game plan.

"Having sustained we then had a scintillating performance from AS1(T) Knight, who produced a third touchdown which was simply sublime, as soon as he had collected the ball and was gone. I knew the outcome as soon as he had the ball.

"I checked the Navy bench and could see the reaction – it was a brilliant moment for us,

RAF Mustangs	39
Royal Navy	19

let's just say that."

Knight was quick to get in on the action in the second quarter for the two-time champions, with AS1(T) Dylan Pole adding the extra point.

FS Adam Hennessy then weaved his way across the line to put the light blues 13 points up, but it wasn't all plain sailing as the Navy brought the score back to 13-7 at half-time.

Knight (pictured right, below) added a third in the third quarter with Cpl James Turner producing a



HORSEPOWER: RAF Mustangs



fabulous display at quarterback, punishing the visitors.

At 27-7 the Navy, who produced their best offensive display so far in the championship's history, pulled things back to 27-19 before Knight and Pole hit home again for the aviator's fourth score of the game.

Wide receiver FS Hennessy was full of praise for his team's performance, and AS1(T) Knight, saying: "He's only been playing the game for a year and his learning curve has been astronomical, what that boy can do with the ball in his hands, he's unbelievable."

Wakeford's team must now await the outcome of the Army Jackals v Royal Navy clash, before facing the Army in a potential winner-takes-all game on March 27 back in Abingdon.

Follow RAF Mustangs on Facebook @RAFAmericanFootball.

RUGBY UNION

Towering tournament

Staff Reporter

SERVICE RUGBY was sent to the Tower as the official launch of this year's Inter-Service Championship got underway.

All three Services were present, with the RAF's senior women's and men's captains AS1 Daisy Fahey and Cpl Mark Williams ably supported by Flt Lt Lucy Nye, showing off the team's new home jersey at the famous London landmark on the Thames.

Williams said: "Hosting this year's IS launch at the Tower of London was truly special. Meeting the other captains and vice-captains in such a historic and stunning setting has only added to the excitement, and I can't wait for the campaign to get underway."

Women's team representative Nye added: "It was amazing to have the IS launch at such a prestigious venue. It just shows the growth in importance of the IS tournament to all three Services. It has sparked the rivalry already."

Members of the veterans' team (Vultures) were also present, along with head coach FS Tom Gardner.



READY FOR BATTLE: Players including Williams (2nd right, front) and Nye (2nd left, front)

CRICKET

Aiming to retain IST20 title

"THIS IS the first time that we go into a season with both titles in year," said RAF T20 cricket captain Flt Lt Adam Fisher.

He will again lead his charges out at Lord's for the IST20 on April 23, to defend the title they won in style last year having beaten the Royal Navy by nine wickets and the Army by eight wickets.

The aviators, under the captaincy of Sgt Ross Diver, also won the IS50 overs championship in Aldershot last July, beating RN by 89 and the Army by 11 runs.

Fisher said: "I have been here 16 years. We had a fruitful period when I started, we had regular wins. That is hopefully back, but we know what losing is about as well, so we value winning a lot. It would be lovely to repeat it.

"We kick our season off earlier due to the April date for the IST20, we have our Trials and Development Day this month in Gloucester then the season starts with a congested timeline.

"We will be weather reliant as we have our usual fixtures, but we are putting five weeks' worth of cricket into three.

"Player form will rely on games being played and them working with their clubs and in their own



GREAT DAY: Fisher receives 2025 trophy

time, but we know we are fortunate to be playing at Lord's and for them to fit us in is brilliant, so we will adjust accordingly.

"Ross [Sgt Diver] is captain of the 50s, we work well together and have played alongside each other, all my focus as T20 captain is on the T20 and Ross's will be on the 50s as with last season. It worked then and will hopefully work this year."

The IST20 kicks off with the UKAFCA women's game at 10am on April 23 at Lord's Cricket Ground, St John's Wood, London NW8 8QN. Tickets are £20 adults, Veterans, over 65s and under 16s £5, and NUS students £10, available at: interservicest20.co.uk

CYCLING



SNOWDONIA: Winter training camp

Peak perfection

THE RAF Road Cycling team held their winter training camp in Snowdonia National Park.

Organised by Sgt Nick Munro and based at RAF Valley, 28 riders ranging from grassroots level to senior club members took part.

Groups rode routes ranging from 50-100 miles with elevations of up to 6000ft. There were also talks on periodisation, nutrition, strength and conditioning and recovery all briefed by ex-RAF rider Ryan Morley – head coach of UK Invictus Games athletes in 2023.

RUGBY UNION

Internationals reveal new-look kits

SERVICE RUGBY union will boast a new look in more ways than one as the men's and women's teams sport a fresh look for the 2026 Inter-Service Championships.

The association turned to two of its international stars – Cpl Josh McNally and Flt Lt Lucy Nye – to show off the 15s and sevens 2026-27 kits from sportswear brand VX3 for a launch at RAF Coningsby in front of one of the station's Eurofighter Typhoon FGR4s.

McNally said: "This shirt is not just about us, it's about before and after us. Wearing the shirt means you represent something bigger than yourself, honouring the legacy and heritage that define us."

The light blue jerseys feature Spitfire detailing with maroon rings on the sleeves and neckline, VX3 and Vodafone logos on

the front chest, Raytheon on the rear and RAF Benevolent Fund branding on each arm. Each shirt has a maroon RAF shield and eagle badge on the chest.

Maroon socks with contrast light blue trim and with RAFRU founding date '1920' on them finish off the look.

Nye said: "Wearing this shirt is about representing something bigger than yourself."

The Inter-Service championships kick off at Cinch Stadium, Franklin's Gardens, home of Northampton Saints RFC, on April 18, when the RAF play the Royal Navy.

The aviators face the Army at Kingsholm Stadium, Gloucester on May 16. Tickets for both games are available at: northamptonssaints.co.uk and gloucester rugby.co.uk respectively.

The new range, plus all RAF Rugby Union training kit, is available from: vx-3.com.



KITTED OUT: Cpl McNally in 15s kit, while Flt Lt Nye sports sevens gear

FOOTBALL

It's French connection for UK Armed Forces women

UKAF WOMEN: Action from 2-1 Remembrance clash victory over Everton Women's Academy at Widnes Stadium in 2025



Daniel Abrahams

AFTER AN unbeaten run of triumphs last year, UK Armed Forces' women footballers' first stop in 2026 is against France, as they host the historic first ever clash next month.

Head coach Sgt Karl Milgate said: "It's been a few years in the making, but we finally get the opportunity to compete against one of Europe's strongest military teams as we welcome France."

The April 15 fixture at the SB Stadium, Sandhurst is just reward for the UK side, who beat the Netherlands to retain the President's Cup, Bundeswehr and Irish Defence Forces in 2025.

The French themselves come with huge credibility, beating one of the world's best, Cameroon, 2-1 in the final of the 2022 CISM World Military Women's championship, being runners-up more recently and having beaten both USA and South Korea.

Milgate added: "I've promised the group for a few years that we will put us against the very best, and this is the moment, what they deserve."



"It will be a momentous occasion for us all involved, one that we look to provide as experiences for those representing at the highest level in Defence. It will be great preparation for looking to retain the President's Cup in May versus Netherlands in the UK."

● Follow the team on Instagram @ukafffootball.

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

NORDIC SKIING

Silver lining for ladies

Staff Reporter

THE RAF Nordic Association (RAFNA) has begun 2026 in strong form after a successful winter tour across the Alps, blending tough training, competitive racing and the occasional battle with gravity.

Based in Toblach, in the Dolomites, the team – made up of five novice male and five novice female athletes, alongside returning development and senior squad members – trained on the World Cup tracks.

Flt Lt Oli Tidswell said: “While the team admit they couldn’t quite match the pace of the professionals, the experience proved invaluable.

“Training built to the demanding 18km Lavazeloppet Ski Marathon. For newcomers it was a significant leap in distance, but one taken in their stride.”

Sqn Ldr Amy Hill (12th) and Flt Lt Lauren Gault (14th) finished inside the top 15 of 50 competitors and Cpl Billy Hodgson (34th), FS Steve Perry (35th), Flt Lt Harry Nuttall (41st) and Sgt Dale Nuttall (50th) placed in the top 50 from a field of 250.

The tour then moved to Ruhpolding, Germany, for the UK National and Inter-Service Cross-Country Ski Championships during the Army’s Ex Rucksack.

Highlights included the women’s team of Sgt Alice Grundy, Sqn Ldr Amy Hill, Flt Lt Anna Clarke and Flt Lt Lauren Gault securing second place in the 4x5km Inter-Service relay, the men’s team of Flt Lt Jason James, FS Steve Perry, Cpl Billy



STAMINA: (l-r) Sqn Ldr Amy Hill, Flt Lt Ant Laundry and Flt Lt Anna Clarke. Main picture, Sgt Alice Grundy



Hodgson and Flt Lt Harry Nuttall also securing second; and Sgt Dale Nuttall, Sgt Richard Bond,

AS1 Russ Williams and Wg Cdr Kieren Jarratt finished fourth in their relay event.

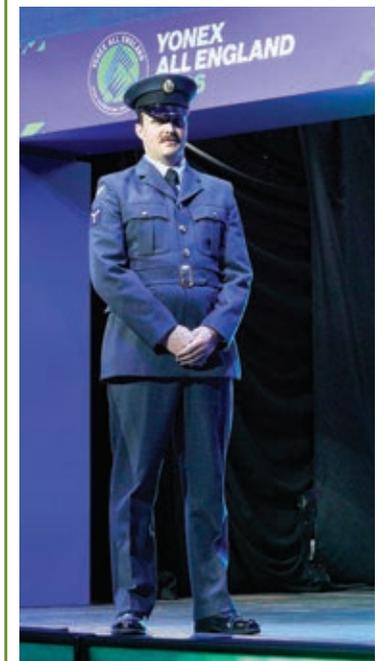
There was a top 10 finish for Flt Lt Jason James in the men’s 10km mass start at the UK National Championships.

This marks a clear step forward from last year, with the RAF taking second place overall behind the Army.

Next stop for the team will be Bardufoss, Norway, for the RAF Championships and the formidable Reistadløpet 35km military ski marathon.

● Follow the team at @RAFNordic on Threads, Instagram and X.

BADMINTON



PRESENTATIONS: AS1 Jacob Marklew

All England honour for Association

RAF PERSONNEL were front and centre at the pinnacle of British and world badminton, the Yonex All England Open Championships.

Following the success of last year’s participation, two members of the RAF Badminton Association, Flt Lt Matt Cross (Waddington) and AS1 Jacob Marklew (Brize Norton), were invited to form the presentation party at the tournament – the sport’s equivalent of the Wimbledon lawn tennis champs.

The pair were on hand to present trophies/medals to the finalists at the Utilita Arena, Birmingham.

Marklew said: “The champs represent the pinnacle of world badminton and remain the most prestigious tournament in the sport.

“To have had the opportunity to represent the RAF and RAF Badminton on such a global stage is a huge privilege and a very proud moment for me.

“Having grown up attending and watching this event from a young age, it is incredibly special to now be part of the presentation ceremony. Being able to showcase the RAF and highlight the long-standing relationship we have with the tournament is a real honour, and it’s an exciting experience to be so close to the action and to present trophies and medals to the very best players in the world.”

● Follow All England Badminton and Forces Badminton on Instagram @allenglandofficial and @ukafbadminton.

BOXING

Dad Brad is back in action at York Hall

SERVICE PROFESSIONAL boxer Cpl Brad Axe has his sights on a May 3 return to the ring for a 50/50 bout against Kevin Reavell (inset) at London’s York Hall.

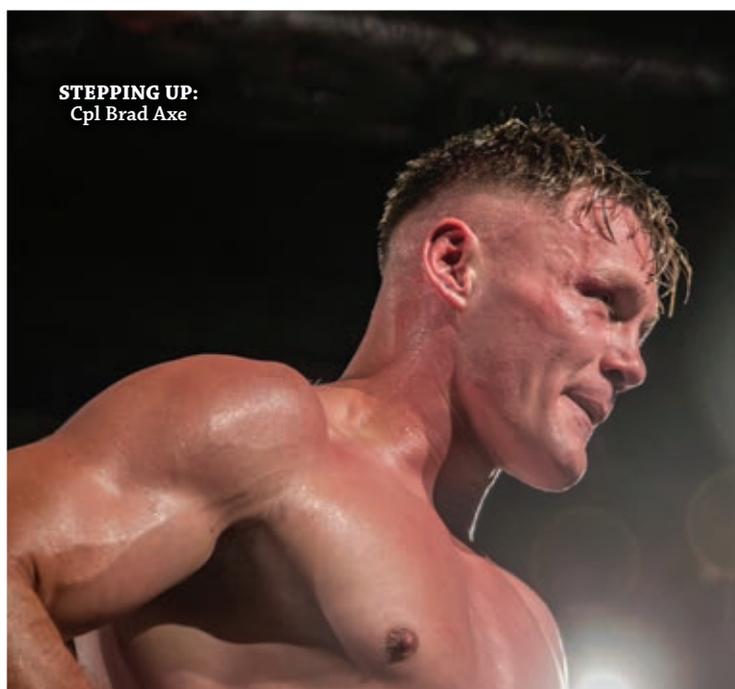
Axe – who defeated Steven Davis after four rounds of blistering action in Bristol last November before taking a break to welcome his second child, Otis Leo, to the world – will return for the DAZN Top Tier eight-round bout at the spiritual home of British boxing in the capital’s East End.



He said: “This is my first eight-round fight and a huge step up in opponent, so my training camp this time round looks a lot harder – longer sparring, more sprints, more rounds.

“Winning this fight will be the bump up the rankings I need to get myself where I want to be by the end of the year – boxing for a southern area title.”

● Tickets for the evening are priced £60 standard and £100 VIP, contact Axe @brad.axe.7 on Facebook for details.



STEPPING UP: Cpl Brad Axe

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



Luge champs are a family affair for AS1 and her dad

See page 23

FOOTBALL

2-1 scoreline flatters the Navy as RAF dominate

Daniel Abrahams

RAF Women	2
Royal Navy Women	1

IN ONE of the most one-sided IS championship clashes in living memory, the RAF women's team survived late pressure to win 2-1 at Lincoln City.

Having dominated the Royal Navy, missing countless chances, the RAF could have recorded a cricket score at the break. Seemingly cruising to a comfortable win, the aviators conceded a 79th Navy strike to set nerves jangling.

Head coach FS Karl Craven said: "I thought we settled well. We played our patterns and having our fullbacks score our goals was great. On another day we could have gone into half-time with a larger lead, but the Navy's last ditched defending frustrated us."

"Securing my first IS win as manager is a proud moment, however, we now focus on playing the Army."

Team captain A/FS Cat Beaver, who lifted the Lynsey Miller Trophy after the win, said: "We know it's important to not lose your first game in the IS, so that was the aim, but to win and dominate the game was special."

"It was even more special as

it was the 10-year anniversary of Sgt Lynsey Miller's passing. She was a player and secretary of the women's team. It meant a lot to receive the trophy from her father."

The bombardment of the Royal Navy goal started from the first off with several chances cleared, before AS1(T) Lucy Farrow just failed to connect on to a superb long pass after 13 minutes. A minute later her effort beat keeper Elish Brogan, but was cleared off the line.

A series of strikes followed, with Beaver's header also cleared off the line. AS1(T) Abi Hayes then netted, after the RAF broke at pace, her shot-cum-chip was too much for the keeper to hold.

With the RAF in total control, a bad foul 30 yards out saw Cpl Phillipa Wilson send over a beautifully flighted free kick, which Cpl Ashleigh Housley-Stott met and deftly headed in.

With their only attack of the second half the Navy scored.

A/FS Beaver was then denied a goal after a great header late on was ruled out for offside, and with that the game was done.



CELEBRATION: Cpl Housley-Stott gets lifted up, while AS1 Lucy Farrow (7) and AS1(T) Abigail Hayes (3) look on

Men outplayed as Senior Service show their quality



HIGH POINT: AS1 Michael Goddard scores with a spectacular flying header

RAF Senior Men	1
Royal Navy	3

THE SENIOR men footballers will look to regain some pride when they face the Army later this month after losing the Inter-Services opener 3-1 to the Royal Navy.

The aviators battled out a lacklustre clash against RN at Shrewsbury's Croud Meadow ground and, having opened the scoring on 43 minutes through a well-worked goal which AS1 Michael Goddard headed home, they conceded three to put the Navy in the driving seat in the championship.

Team captain FS Mike Campbell said: "Ultimately the

better team won on the night. We prepared well, executed our game plan in the first half and went in at the break 1-0 up. The Navy changed tactically and with the quality they had, we couldn't react in time.

"All we can do now is beat the Army and hope results go our way. I'm proud of the team, and there's still one game to go."

Sgt Chris Hamilton's charges will hope to recover against the Army, before the Army and Navy play at Fratton Park on March 25.

Goddard's diving header put the Air Force in front at half-time and was the only highlight for the men in light blue after a ponderous first half which saw the visitors hit the bar.

The hosts only managed to test

the Navy keeper Cpl Laurence McCormick with long-range shots from Cpl Joe Spalding and AS1(T) Josh Randall.

The Air Force goal was a standout moment in an otherwise forgettable half, as Spalding's running on the right was followed by a great cross from team captain Campbell, which Goddard met with a diving header.

The hosts failed to press home their advantage and the Navy levelled on 67 minutes and then took just three minutes more to get their second. The third came from an 80th-minute corner off the head of Cpl Mark Drysdale and the game was gone from a RAF perspective, despite some late pressure.



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R'n'R



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● p5

Boudica's back – Horrible Histories on stage

● See
page 5

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**COMBAT
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FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH

R'n'R



Theatre
Sunny Afternoon
 UK tour

Sunny delight

FOLLOWING TWO years in London's West End and a hit UK and Ireland tour, the Olivier award-winning best new musical *Sunny Afternoon* is back on the road.

Featuring an original story and music and lyrics by The Kinks frontman Ray Davies, the musical charts the euphoric highs and agonising lows through their catalogue of chart-topping hits, including *You Really Got Me*, *Lola* and *All Day and All of the Night*.

Sunny Afternoon tours until May 30 and goes to venues including Milton Keynes Theatre (March 24-28), Leicester's Curve Theatre (April 21-25) and the Empire Theatre, Liverpool (May 19-23).

What has it been like for Davies (*inset*) seeing his songs and story come to life on stage?

"Daunting at first," he revealed.



But there were plenty of clouds for The Kinks too

"I was working on the storyline on and off for three years, but in many ways the story is contained within the songs. The songs were written in such specific moments of my life and now they've been reinterpreted, given new context.

"It's humbling, and sometimes a bit surreal, to see the audience connect to those moments as if they're happening now. It's proof that the music still has a pulse."

He was closely involved in shaping the show. How did he approach revisiting his own past and turning The Kinks' history into a musical?

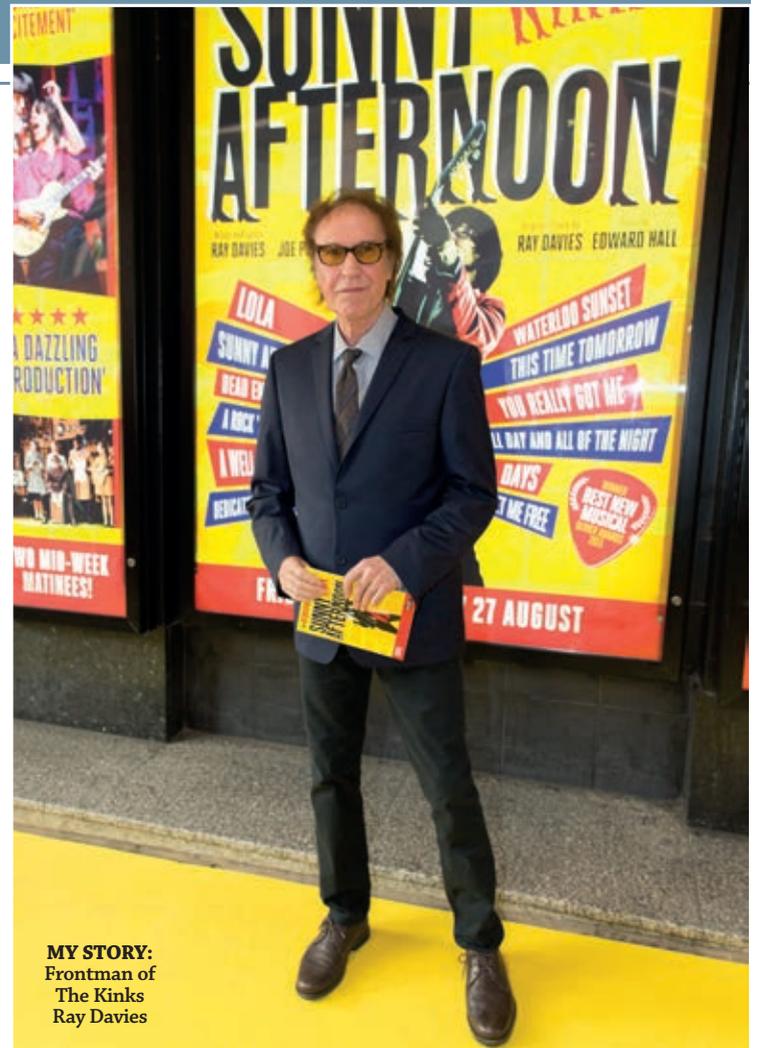
He explained: "With caution at the beginning, so I pretended it was about

somebody else. I didn't want it to be just another jukebox musical. I wanted *Sunny Afternoon* to have heart, to show what it really felt like to live through that madness.

"We approached it as a piece of storytelling, not nostalgia. I went back to the songs and the memories behind them and tried to weave them into something honest. It wasn't about polishing the past, it was about exploring it with the rawness that inspired the songs in the first place."

And what has it meant to Davies to showcase his back catalogue all in one place with this show?

He said: "It's been a gift. Songs like *Lola* or *Days* have their own lives, but when you hear them alongside *Dead End Street* or *Sunny Afternoon* you see the



MY STORY:
 Frontman of
 The Kinks
 Ray Davies

full picture. The musical gave me the chance to connect those dots for people, to show how the songs talk to each other. And it

reminded me too, why I wrote them in the first place."

● **Go to:** uk.thekinksmusical.com for all tour details.



Comedy
Jason Byrne
 30 years Byrning

30 years of Byrne's mayhem



MADCAP:
 Jason Byrne

JASON BYRNE is back and Byrning brighter than ever. He will celebrate an incredible 30 years in comedy with his new live show, *30 Years Byrning*.

It kicks off with a full run at the Assembly Hall as part of this year's Edinburgh Festival, from August 6-30, before embarking on a major UK tour from September 24 in Norwich until November 20 in Dunfermline.

Jason said: "Please join me to celebrate three Byrning decades of my unique comedy. A ram-packed show, full of stunts and props, from the past and present. Audiences from the past and present too, which is simply the audience from the past coming back to the present. Brand new stand-up, which may include stories from the past. Do not miss this show, or you will not be present."

● **Go to:** jasonbyrne.ie for full tour and ticket details.



Film Review
Sirât (15)
 In cinemas now

Unsettling desert rave

A SPANISH father searches for his missing daughter at a desert rave in Morocco in this tense, unpredictable road thriller.

Luis (Sergi López) has been looking for his daughter for months. She's an adult, old enough to vanish on her own terms, unlike his young son Esteban (Bruno Núñez), who is reluctantly along for the ride, as is Pippa, their Jack Russell terrier.

The film opens on the construction of a towering stack of speakers in the middle of a sun-bleached expanse. When switched on, they release a low, cavernous bass that ripples across the desert floor. Before long, the void fills with dancing bodies. The electronic score pulses like a second heartbeat, syncing the film to the music itself.

Amid the gathering, ravers fuelled by rhythm, dust and very probably psychedelics, Luis and his family are unmistakably out of place. He moves through the crowd with printed photos of his daughter, his anxiety cutting into the communal euphoria. Eventually he encounters the organisers: a ragtag collective of seasoned nomads, some bearing the physical scars of their lifestyle. They tell him that if she isn't here, she may be at the next rave across the border in Mauritania. Against better judgement, and with diminishing hope, Luis joins them.

There is a spiritual undercurrent



SEARCH: A concerned father looks for his daughter

running through *Sirât*. Its characters seem to search for escape, maybe even transcendence. It is about connection as much as loss, these themes expressed ceremonially through music and dance. Many of the performers are real ravers, which lends an authenticity.

Sirât begins as a mystery, but as soon as its trajectory seems clear, it swerves. What unfolds is dark, volatile and disorientating. The less known about its turns the better – its power lies in keeping both Luis and the audience off-balance. It is not for everyone, but will leave a lasting impression regardless.

Four roundels out of five ●●●●
Review by Sam Cooney



Theatre
Double Indemnity
UK tour

HOLLYWOOD'S MISCHA Barton (*The O.C.*) has been drawing in the crowds for her feted performance in the lead role of a new stage adaptation of crime classic *Double Indemnity*.

It marks Barton's long-awaited UK stage debut as the ultimate femme fatale in the powerful story based on James M. Cain's book.

Inspired by Billy Wilder's legendary film noir masterpiece that starred screen icon Barbara Stanwyck as the dangerously seductive Phyllis Nirdlinger, the play is currently touring until early May. It goes to the Wycombe Swan Theatre from April 7-11, Bromley's Churchill Theatre from April 21-25, Manchester Opera House from April 29-May 2, then the New Theatre, Cardiff from May 5-9.

Set in Los Angeles during the 1930s, amidst the wreckage of the Great Depression, *Double Indemnity* follows Walter Huff (Ciarán Owens), a sharp-eyed insurance salesman who has built his career spotting scams. But when he meets the glamorous Phyllis to discuss her husband's life insurance policy, he is drawn into a web of lust, greed and betrayal.

Together, they plot the perfect crime: murder the husband, cash in the policy, and vanish into the Californian sunset. But passion clouds judgement and guilt corrodes even the most perfect of plans. As their conspiracy unravels and mistrust festers, Walter and Phyllis find themselves battling not only the law, but each other.

Describing Phyllis, Barton said, with a laugh: "I think she's got a soft spot for men in general and tends to get herself into quite a bit of trouble."

As the seductress/murderess/man-eater from what is thought of as perhaps the classic film noir – which has a screenplay

DOUBLE TROUBLE

Barton and Owens have murder on their minds in film noir masterpiece

by Raymond Chandler and was directed by *Some Like It Hot's* Wilder – Phyllis is arguably the baddest bad girl in movie history; is that something Mischa can relate to?

"Well, I think she's multifaceted and I can relate to that," Barton said. "I think she's got a lot of different sides to her and has strong opinions about not being tied down as a woman in a man's world and that leads her to do all sorts of things... like murder. She really is ruthless when it comes to not simply being the pretty thing that sits on the couch."

Mischa (*inset*) was one of the biggest TV stars of the 2000s when she was in *The O.C.* – she has also

been in blockbuster films like *The Sixth Sense* and *Notting Hill*, both when she was a hard-working pre-teen actress as well as, more recently, *Neighbours* and a series of movies called *Invitation to a Murder*. But it all started on stage in a series of critically acclaimed plays like Tony Kushner's *Slavs!* and as the lead at New York's prestigious Lincoln Center in James Lapine's *Twelve Dreams*, garnering New York Times reviews calling her 'chillingly authoritative' at just eight years old.

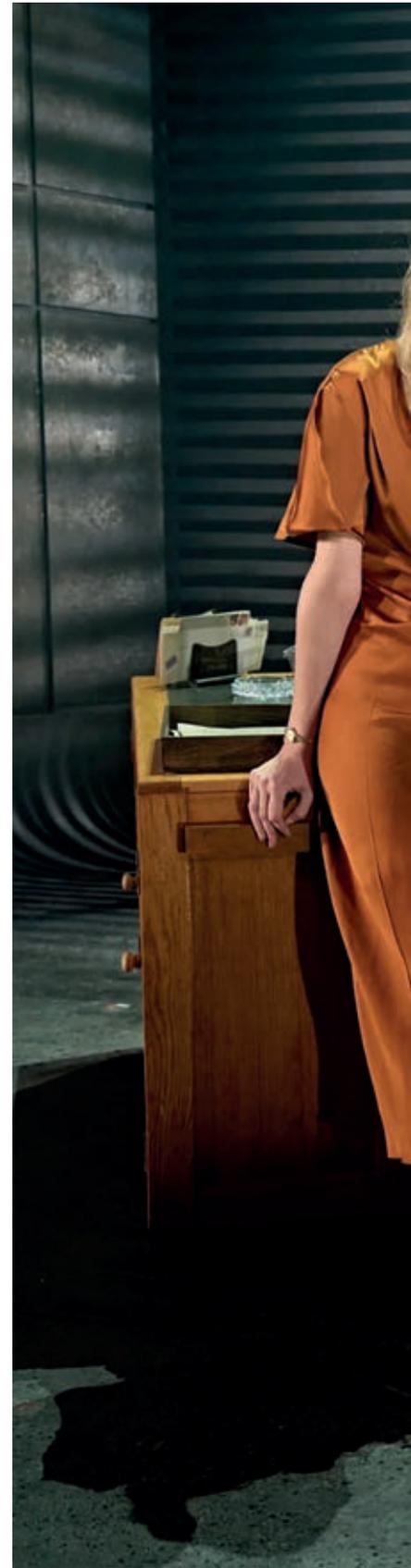
Back to *Double Indemnity* and you wonder with such an iconic role whether she avoided the original book and the movie so as not to be influenced by them, but that's clearly not Mischa's

process. "Quite the opposite," she said. "The first thing I did when they handed me *Double Indemnity* was go and watch the movie to remind myself what it's like and watch Stanwyck's performance. It is an iconic role so it was definitely worth looking at the material and then deciding which bits we were going to concentrate on and what doesn't really serve the purpose of the play now in 2026."

Dating back to the 1930s in the case of the book and the 1940s for the film, you wonder if the story feels dated in any way but not according to Mischa, who thinks that there's a feel about it that's very much now, especially in the new adaptation by award-winning writer Tom Holloway.

"*Double Indemnity* is one of those cornerstones of film noir," she said. "It takes place in Los Angeles after the Great Depression and, because there's this air of desperation in all of these characters in as far as what they're going to do and why they're going to do it, you could relate it to now. We're going through an interesting time in the world, and I think it translates well."

● **Go to:** doubleindemnityplay.co.uk for more information.
Interview by Simon Gage



TV
Spymasters
Sky Arts

Shining a light on murky world

A NEW four-part TV series which delves into the lives, works and secrets of some of the most brilliant spy authors in literature, from Erskine Childers to James Bond and John le Carré, premieres on Sky Arts soon.

The first of the four weekly episodes of *Spymasters* goes out at 9pm on March 31. The series combines interviews with leading academics and biographers together with excerpts from many spy books and films.

A spokesperson said: "Espionage is a covert geopolitical struggle and a thriving media genre, marked by intricate plots and intense suspense. Numerous film and television franchises feature spies, while spy

novels enjoy immense popularity.

"Beneath the surface of these compelling narratives lies a darker reality of violence and constant surveillance by state actors, all in the name of national interests.

They added: "The series examines the biographies of key writers and their contributions to literature, film and television, alongside the geopolitical contexts of their narratives. Key historical events include insights into contemporary espionage activity, the war in Ukraine, and the activities of hostile states. It features insights from espionage experts, including Britain's MI6 official historian, Prof Christopher Andrew."

The first episode examines the evolution of spy literature from Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* to the works of Graham Greene and John le Carré, highlighting the historical and psychological underpinnings of espionage.

Episode two focuses on the evolution of spy fiction from World War II through the Cold War, highlighting key authors such as Alistair MacLean, Ken Follett and le Carré.

In the third episode the narrative explores the iconic figure of James Bond, created by Ian Fleming, and the cultural impact of Bond's portrayal in literature and film.

"The narrative also addresses the impact of Bond on real-world intelligence

practices, including the perception of and the misconceptions stemming from the fictionalised lifestyle portrayed in films," the spokesperson said.

"As the episode progresses, it examines the evolution of intelligence work from the War to contemporary challenges, including counterterrorism and the role of corporations in intelligence gathering."

And in episode four the focus shifts to the evolution of espionage from the War through the War on Terror and beyond, highlighting pivotal moments and key figures in intelligence history.

● **Go to:** sky.com for more details.

Edited by Executive Features Editor Tracey Allen



SEDUCED: Walter Huff (Ciarán Owens) has his head turned by the beautiful and manipulative Phyllis Nirdlinger (Mischa Barton) PHOTO: MANUEL HARLEN

World of espionage

spies from Bond

es the Cold including orate

fts to Cold beyond, gures



FEATURED: Author John le Carré



SPY: Double agent Kim Philby



Competition
Forge Ahead Wall Art
3D-printed aircraft



Win 3D printed Typhoon artwork

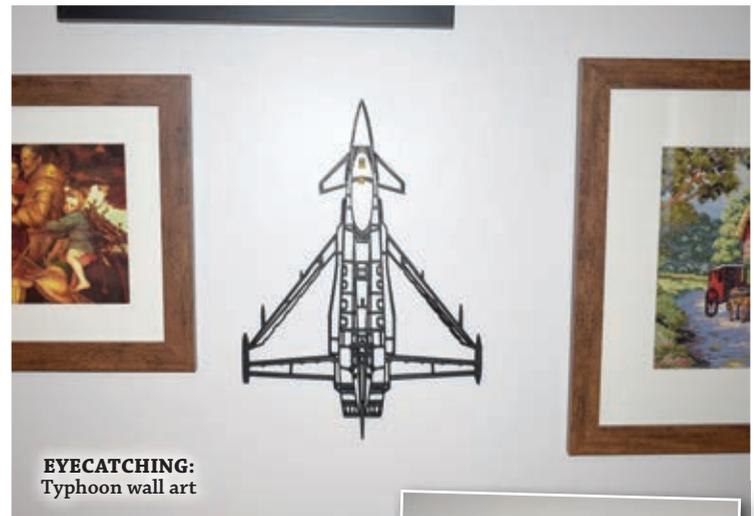
Forge Ahead Wall Art specialises in 3D printed wall art and currently focuses mainly on RAF aircraft types.

The company's bestseller in 2025 was the 3D printed Eurofighter Typhoon artwork which it produces in black or grey. This novel wall art is designed to be hung at any angle on the wall, and is available in dimensions ranging from 20cm to 45cm long by 4mm deep.

RAF News has teamed up with Forge Ahead Wall Art for a fantastic reader competition – you could win a 3D printed Eurofighter Typhoon artwork in black, rrp £15.99.

Forge Ahead Wall Art is a small family-run business which specialises in aviation wall art, producing civilian and military aircraft designs, including the Avro Vulcan, the English Electric Lightning and the de Havilland Mosquito.

The company have catered for pilots, engineers and enthusiasts as well as for the aviation industry. Its designs are available from its Etsy Shop (ForgeAheadWallArt) or its eBay Shop (Forge Ahead Wall Art) or go to: forgeaheadwallart.co to see the full range of products available.



EYECATCHING: Typhoon wall art

To be in with a chance of winning a 3D printed Eurofighter Typhoon artwork in black, answer the following question:

What was Forge Ahead Wall Art's bestseller in 2025?

Email your answer, marked Wall Art competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe HP14 4UE, to arrive by April 10.

Don't forget to include your full postal address with your answer.



Theatre
Horrible Histories Live
UK tour

A Horrible night out

THE CAST of the *Horrible Histories* hit TV series and theatre shows are currently on tour bringing the BAFTA Award-winning television show to life on stage.

It's at Nottingham's Royal Concert Hall from March 29, then goes to the Mayflower Theatre, Southampton (April 2-4), York Barbican (April 6-7) and Brighton Dome (April 9-11) culminating at Sunderland Empire (April 17-18).

Horrible Histories Live (and Dead!) on Stage *The Concert* features both the hit TV songs and stars of the popular CBBC series – a unique combination never before seen on tour.

When William Shakespeare is asked to create the greatest show on earth, he knows it won't be easy – but he has no idea how much trouble he'll get from monstrous monarchs like Henry



ROYALLY GOOD: Stage show teaches about history in an amusing way

VIII, Elizabeth I and Queen Victoria. Things hot up when Death appears, and now Boudica and Cleopatra want to take over. Can things get any worse? Of course they can...

Featuring a live band led by Richie Webb performing his much-loved TV songs, with guest appearances from Charles II, Dick Turpin and a bunch of Vikings barging through the stage door, *Horrible Histories – The Concert* is described as a

truly Horrible night out. The show stars Richard David-Caine, one of the BBC show's longest-serving performers, Harrie Hayes, who has embodied history's most iconic royals, from Elizabeth I to Marie Antoinette on the BBC series and Neal Foster, the company's Actor/Manager and creative force behind all the *Horrible Histories Live on Stage* shows since 2005. ● **Go to: birminghamstage.com for full tour details.**



Your Announcements

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

Associations

RAF Bawdsey Reunion Association. Have you ever served at RAF Bawdsey? If so, why not join our Association and come along to our next Annual Reunion to be held at Bawdsey Manor on Saturday, June 6.. For full details please contact Doreen Calver on: doreen.bawdseyreunion@btinternet.com or telephone her on: 0751 3301 723.

591 SU Association. In its 72nd year of existence, 591 Signal Unit has established an Association (better late than never!). Ex-members and currently serving ex members of 591 SU are invited to visit the Association's website at: 591suassociation.co.uk for membership details and news of the next annual reunion along with other upcoming events for 2026.

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

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

THE RAF Air Loadmaster Association (ALMA) will be marking its 25th anniversary in May with a weekend of special events. The Association will be holding a Gala Dinner at the RAF Club on Saturday, May 9 followed by a service of commemoration at the RAF church, St Clement Danes in The Strand, central London, on Sunday, May 10, followed by lunch.

Both events will be attended by the ALMA's patron, former Chief of the Air Staff ACM Sir Andy Pulford. During the service, a commemorative Association crest floor tile will be unveiled. There will also be a visit to the Houses of Parliament on the afternoon of Friday, May 8, followed by dinner at the Archduke in Waterloo, then a visit to the Tower of London on the afternoon of May 9. The Association is looking to recruit new members. If you are interested in joining, or would like more information about the anniversary events, please contact Les Weston via email: lesalma9001@gmail.com or you can call on the following number: 0753 1523456.

THE 23 Squadron Association is pleased to announce its intention to hold its Association Dinner on Saturday, October 10. The event will provide a valuable opportunity for former members of 23 Squadron to reconnect, share memories, and celebrate the proud history of the Red Eagles. The Squadron Committee cordially invites all previous personnel who have served with 23 Squadron – across all eras and roles – to register their interest and request further details, including venue details, timings, menu and booking instructions via the email address: [redeagles23sqn@outlook.com](mailto:red eagles23sqn@outlook.com)

Reunions

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

ALL ex Clk Secs who were trained on the Apprentice Wing at RAF Credenhill in the 1960s and 1970s are cordially invited to contact the undersigned with

a view to arranging a reunion this year. Please email: David.tibbett@ntlworld.com

Fundraising concert

THE ROYAL Air Force Music Charitable Trust's 2026 fundraising concert tour starts on April 18 with a special big band concert held in the Lecture Theatre of Newark Academy featuring Royal Air Force Swing Wing with guest jazz trumpet soloist Nathan Bray – well known for playing with Ronnie Scott's Big Band.

On May 16 the charity presents a concert in Lincoln Cathedral performed by the Band of the Royal Air Force College with compère Melvyn Prior, featuring music from renowned composer John Williams. Concerts will follow with the Central Band of the RAF and the Band of the RAF College in Weston-super-Mare, Epsom, Newark and Doncaster. The 2026 tour will end with another RAF Swing Wing big band concert at the Terry O'Toole Theatre in Lincoln on October 16.

Go to: rafconcerts.uk for further information.

RAFA V50 challenge

THE RAFA V50 challenge has netted a staggering £142,000 for the charity to date. The 'V' stands for virtual – wherever you are in the world, you can take part. How you complete your 50 miles is up to you – walk, run, cycle, hike or even roller skate. You can mix and match activities to fit around your lifestyle.

This year's challenge runs from April 27 to May 3. You can go solo or team up with friends, family or colleagues – however you choose to take part, the Association will support you with fundraising tips, advice and a RAFA V50 T-shirt.

Go to: rafa.org.uk to find out more or search RAFA V50.

Phantom vets mark 50 years



CHEERS: The veterans raise a glass to the mighty Phantom and to crew members from the past five decades

A GROUP of RAF veterans who had all operated the Phantom strike fighter together half a century ago gathered at a dinner recently to celebrate 50 years since the Phantom left RAF Brüggen.

Sixteen former pilots and navigators, now in their 70s and 80s, travelled from all over England to meet at the Crown Hotel, Stamford for the special event.

Rob Sargent, from the group, said: "Fifty years ago this summer on the retirement of the Lightning fighter force in Germany the responsibility for the nuclear strike role at Brüggen was transferred to the single seat SEPECAT Jaguar aircraft, this

time armed with a British tactical nuclear weapon.

"This allowed the Phantoms to move some 10 miles south to RAF Wildenrath, where they then operated in the air defence role to replace the Lightning. This required them to hold a similar QRA state in order to react promptly to unauthorised intruders flying into NATO airspace."

He added: "Phantom veterans made the trip to Stamford recently from as far away as Cumbria, Lancashire, Yorkshire, Berkshire, Lincolnshire, Somerset, Sussex, Dorset and Surrey, to attend the dinner. To acknowledge those who couldn't make it, the toast was 'absent friends.'"

Donation helps vets with MS

THE RAF Benevolent Fund has donated £5,000 to help Mutual Support, the Armed Forces Multiple Sclerosis Support Group, to deliver its wellbeing weekends to RAF veterans and their dependents living with MS.

A spokesperson said: "Our weekends help our beneficiaries to improve their mental wellbeing, relationships with others, reduce social isolation, displacement and loneliness whilst offering access to the wider support that we offer to our community. We aim to inform, engage and assist our Service veterans and their families."

Clinical neuropsychologist Dr Anita Rose, one of the patrons of Mutual Support, said: "I believe you cannot put a price on the benefit the Support Weekends have on members. People come broken and return home whole; people come lonely and go home with friends; whole families who come fractured go home in one piece; children who come as young carers go home as themselves once more. These benefits are priceless and life affirming and life-changing."

The spokesperson added: "We are an independently funded and wholly volunteer led charity and are therefore largely reliant on financial benefactors. The RAFBF donation will enable our important work to continue."

● Go to: mutual-support.org.uk 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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Appeal to female flyers

A PhD student at King's College, London, has put out an appeal for women who have undergone flying training in the RAF since 1989 to contact him.

Mark Russell (*right*) began research for his doctorate last autumn and would like to interview the women, regardless of whether they went on to attain their wings, he said.

"My interest was fired by reading a dismissive review of the memoir *An Officer. Not A Gentleman* by Mandy Hickson (*below*), the UK's second woman to fly the Tornado GR4 operationally," he explained.

"These are experiences that deserve to be documented, and lessons potentially learned for today's RAF, and for this reason I am looking to interview both retired and serving aircrew about their RAF careers.

"I will be seeking the relevant MOD approval for interviews with



currently serving aircrew," he said. "I am keen to identify women who would be happy to be interviewed, either face to face or online, with interviews being anonymised if people wish.

"If you, or someone you know, would like to understand more about my research, please contact me," Mark added.

His email address is: mark.4.russell@kcl.ac.uk



Meet the RAF at Town Shows

A CHINOOK aircraft replica was centre stage in Times Square in Newcastle for the first of 15 RAF Town Shows across the UK.

The showcase transformed Times Square into an aviation experience centre (*pictured right*) featuring interactive activities for all ages.

Visitors were able to walk through aircraft interiors, speak directly with pilots, engineers and aircrew about their roles, and discover how North East residents have built careers in the RAF.

Members of the public got the chance to hear about the experiences of serving personnel competing in sport, gaining qualifications in Service and travelling the world, all while developing leadership and technical skills in their primary roles.

Event organiser Flt Lt Stephen Seed said: "This is the first time we've brought the RAF Town Show to Newcastle and we have loved showing the people of the North East what a career in the



RAF really looks like. Whether interested in flying, working on cutting-edge radar systems or using skills in cyber defence, the public have had the chance to meet the people who do it every

day and find out if it's the right path for them."

Town Shows go to various venues throughout the UK in 2026 and are free to attend.

Go to: recruitment.raf.mod.uk



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R'n'R



Prize Crossword No. 405

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

Across

- 7. Big cat has, for example, big company (6)
- 8. RAF trainer cut up quite a number (6)
- 10. Lift the lid on Austen novel? Should I? (7)
- 11. **And 22 Across.** Mineral tin processed by Italian footballers (5,5)
- 12. Mark isn't English (4)
- 13. The woman in middle of conception has woolly jumper (5)
- 17. Note terrible smell of Big Apple timber (5)
- 18. Monk moves from Los Angeles to Massachusetts (4)
- 22. **See 11 Across**
- 23. Go away! They're odd shower! (7)
- 24. **And 25 Across.** Solution none used in old RAF station (6-2-4)
- 25. **See 24 Across**

Down

- 1. Moving smoothly as some pilots do (7)
- 2. Athleticism shown by a US soldier illuminated youth, initially (7)
- 3. Teaching Rover and his mother (5)
- 4. Its impact on the UK's rotary wing capability is out of this world (7)
- 5. Go through Western Australia street heading east (5)
- 6. Snake has medic turning to directors (5)
- 9. Without me, seaman's shah becomes Red Arrows leader (5,4)
- 14. Leave a bar with Bradman (7)
- 15. Exclude actors, now unfashionable (4,3)
- 16. Maybe hire a Rolls-Royce RAF plane (7)
- 19. Emil's confused by beam (5)
- 20. Walking it was fatal for sailors (5)
- 21. By the sound of it, a central state (5)

Name:

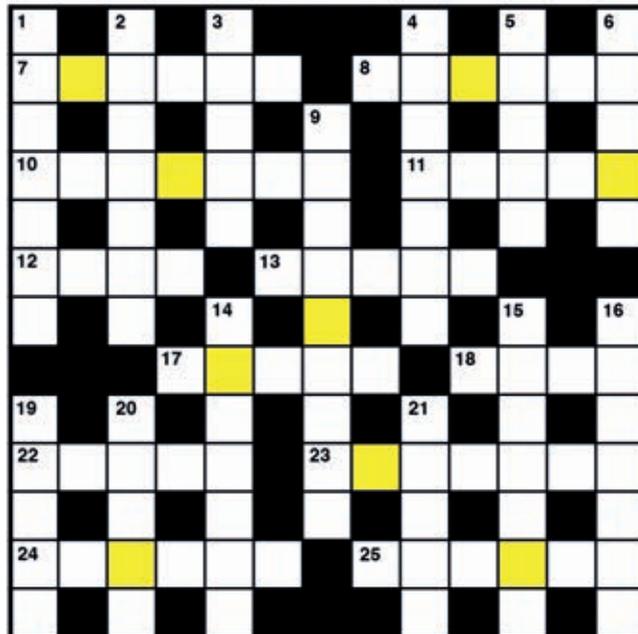
Address:

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RAF aircraft: Crossword No. 405

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 April 3, 2026.

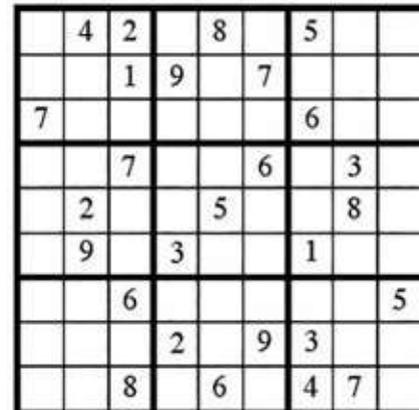


Solution to Crossword No. 404
Across – 6. Run Away 7. Fleet 9. Banal 10. Shrivel 12. Fire Brigade 14. Globemaster 18. Openers 19. Train 21. Relax 22. Chopper
Down – 1. Pumas 2. Salami 3. Can 4. Flying 5. Legends 8. Cherish 11. Denmark 13. Slipper 15. Bantam 16. Europe 17. Liver 20. The
Overseas aircraft: Rafale
Prize Crossword No. 404 winner is: Steve Barnes, Lincolnshire.



Prize Su Doku No. 415

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 April 3, 2026. The winner of Su Doku No: 415 is: Mr MJW Halford, Exeter.

Solution to Su Doku No. 414

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



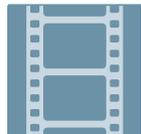
Music Alison Moyet UK & Europe tour



Returning to Yazoo years

AFTER 2024's *Key* album prompted a rediscovery of her solo catalogue and her first top 10 chart position in 11 years, Alison Moyet has announced details of a UK and European headline tour, starting in September. The tour will consist exclusively of songs from the Yazoo catalogue and select tracks from her acclaimed solo electronica albums *'the minutes'* and *'Other'*. Alison said: "Many years touring the same pool of songs

and I am keen for a palate refresher. Specifying which years I will be fishing from too, I think is a grand way to serve pot luck for specific tastes. No bones..." She will embark on a 21-date tour of North America this summer as a special guest on The Human League's *Generations* tour, alongside Soft Cell. The tour will take in iconic venues such as the Hollywood Bowl in LA and Radio City Music Hall in NY. **Go to: alisonmoyetmusic.com for full tour info.**



Film Review The Tasters (15) In cinemas now

Nazis leave a bad taste

SEVEN YOUNG, healthy German women are selected from a nearby town to become Adolf Hitler's personal canaries in *The Tasters*, a fictionalised account of real events inspired by the testimony of Margot Wölk. Ever since the Führer's HQ, the Wolf's Lair, moved into the forests of East Prussia, food has become scarce. Rosa (Elisa Schlott), a Berlin transplant, who has just arrived at her in-laws, can't believe her luck when, after being picked up by Nazi officers and medically examined, she is seated before a table of meticulously prepared vegetarian meals. It is only after she and the group finish eating that a guard insists they stay seated for an hour to ensure none of the food is poisoned. This element of the film plays like a high-concept horror: as we sit with the women, and the chef, waiting to see if anyone will die. The film quickly pushes outside of these scenes though, observing the uneasy bonds between the women. Rosa is marked as the outsider, the "Berliner", while the others, who are all familiar, reveal varying degrees of allegiance to each other and even the regime.



NO SUCH THING AS A FREE LUNCH: The Tasters could pay with their lives

Leni (Emma Falck), for instance, toasts to victory before eating her portion – the meal becoming a potent symbol of what is being fed to the German people. Tensions simmer. Most of the tasters have suffered loss, their husbands not returning from the Eastern Front. Rosa clings to the idea that her husband Gregor is merely missing in action and will return for Christmas. "This place is a barracks, not a boarding school," insists one of the women, who has clearly lost any sense of hope.

It's a strange film that attempts to show a different angle of the insidious cruelty of the Nazis, far from the frontline or concentration camps. One plot line follows an unlikely romance between a taster and a severe Nazi officer (Max Riemelt), which is confusing initially but will find its place in the story. *The Tasters* is based on an unsettling idea, but gets lost making it something more. **Two roundels out of five** **Review by Sam Cooney**