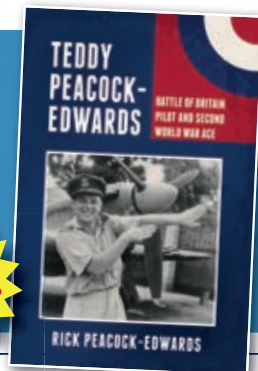


The Forces' favourite paper

My dad Teddy, WWII ace

See page 19

Win!



Win the new book Phantom – a Cold War icon

See R'n'R page 8



ROYAL AIR FORCE

Friday, August 21, 2026
Edition No.1639

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RAF News



Pilot portraits honour BBMF's Sqn Ldr Long

See pages 14-15



Rugby Global XV selections



See page 24

Skeleton Engineered for success



See p25

Cycling Crit-ical thinkers



See page 27

Castle magic



Simon Mander

ROYAL AIR Force musicians and The King's Colour Squadron brought precise footwork and skill to the esplanade during The Massed Military Bands display at this year's Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo.

An 8,600-strong crowd packed the Edinburgh Castle parade ground as the three-week military bonanza kicked off, led by the RAF.

This year's event, titled 'A Call to Gather', features military bands and personnel from across the world showcasing their ceremonial skills, alongside the UK Forces performers.

BiteSize

“The icy water blistered my skin and bits of my tongue were raw,”



Sqn Ldr Nic Mackay after her gruelling solo Channel swim

See page 5

“The sort of people you’d invite round for a G&T and then you’d discover dark secrets,”



Get Between the Covers with Nigel Havers

See R’n’R pp4-5

“Being selected to represent the RAF is always a point of pride,”



Women’s fencing captain Sqn Ldr Elsa Phillipson

See page 27



ROYAL AIR FORCE
RAF News

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

Editor: Simon Williams
Email: editor@rafnews.co.uk

Executive Features Editor:
Tracey Allen
Email: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk

News Editor: Simon Mander
Email: Simon.Mander116@mod.gov.uk

Sport: sports@rafnews.co.uk

All advertising:
Edwin Rodrigues
Tel: 07482 571535
Email: edwin.rodrigues@rafnews.co.uk

Subscriptions and distribution:
RAF News Subscriptions
c/o Intermedia,
Unit 6 The Enterprise Centre,
Kelvin Lane, Crawley
RH10 9PE
Tel: 01293 312191
Email: rafnewssubs@subscriptionhelpline.co.uk



A CHINOOK from Benson operated by 28 Sqn took off for a training tasking during the Solar Eclipse. Evening light gave way to twilight over the Oxfordshire airbase as the moon drifted across the sun during the once-in-a-generation phenomena. It was the first total solar eclipse visible in parts of mainland Europe since 1999. Most of Europe, including the UK, northern North America and West Africa experienced a dramatic partial solar eclipse. The British Isles will not experience another major solar eclipse until September 2090. PHOTO: SGT TIM LAURENCE

This Week In History



1934 Gyro debut

THE ROYAL Air Force’s first rotary wing aircraft, a Cierva autogyro, is delivered to the RAF School of Army Co-operation at Old Sarum.



1987 Death of Hess

THE BODY of Nazi war criminal Rudolf Hess was flown out of Berlin in a Hercules following his death in Spandau Prison.



1991 Diana’s final flight

32 (THE ROYAL) SQN return the body of HRH Diana The Princess of Wales to Northolt on board a BAE 146 following her death in a car crash in Paris.

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

Dad's the word for rookie Em

Lynn Dunne
Leeming

WHILST THE emotional roller coaster of driving lessons with a parent or child will be familiar to many, few can claim the same experience in the air.

So, taking his daughter for her first sortie in a Tutor aircraft as a University Air Squadron Cadet was a special event for one of Leeming's most experienced pilots.

With 38 years in the Regular RAF under his belt, and a new Reservist career underway, it's fair to say that Flt Lt James Harris has done a lot of flying.

Starting his career on the Tornado GR1, James spent significant time on 100 Sqn and squeezed in exchanges in Pakistan and South Africa.

Now part of Yorkshire Universities Air Squadron, his

time is spent teaching the Next Generation of potential pilots.

James said: "I try to impart some of the experience that I've learned over the years because you can't get it from a book. It's rewarding



when you fly someone who's never even flown in anything before, and they're absolutely thrilled by it. Some are really nervous, some

aren't at all. Some yelp with joy and others hardly say anything."

This lesson was different as James briefed his daughter Emily, who joined the Northumbrian Universities Air Squadron earlier this year, before taking to the skies together.

He said: "It's different when you fly with your own child. It will be a privilege, and we'll get a job done. We'll make it business as usual."

Emily added: "I was definitely inspired by my dad to join the UAS - I wouldn't have known about it otherwise. I'm still not sure what I want to do, but dad being in the RAF has made me think about it as an option. It's more than just a job."

"I'm really, really excited about the flight - a little nervous, but not too much."

"Dad taught me how to drive, he's a very good teacher. He has a lot of trust in me, which is good, but it's a bit scary sometimes."



OFF TO A FLYER: UAS cadet Emily prepares for her first training sortie at Leeming with dad James



UK signs off in Romania

Simon Mander

TYPHOONS SCRAMBLED more than 50 times during the RAF's latest deployment policing Nato's south-eastern flank against Russian aggression.

Combat jets from 121 Expeditionary Air Wing flew more than 180 flying hours, while maintaining aircraft and crews on very high readiness.

Detachment commander Wg Cdr Daz Wicks-Randy said: "As we hand over responsibility to the Spanish Air Force, we do so with a great sense of pride. Our people have delivered operational excellence throughout the deployment, maintaining Nato's Air Policing mission while building enduring relationships with our Allied partners."

Operating from Borcea Air Base in Romania, the Coningsby-based fighters responded to nearly 10 Alpha Scrambles

and conducted more than 40 training launches. They maintained continuous Quick Reaction Alert, ensuring Nato's ability to respond rapidly to potential airspace violations as part of its Eastern



Sentry mission, while working closely with Romanian and Allied forces.

The deployment also marked a shift from the alliance's Air Policing mission to a broader Air Defence role as part of Nato's Integrated Air and Missile Defence framework.

During their deployment, the British contingent participated in Exercise Beastling Monolith, conducting Air-Land Integration and Close Air Support training alongside Nato Joint Terminal Attack Controllers from France, Poland, Spain, Belgium and Italy.

Other Enhanced Vigilance Activity included Neptune Strike and Exercise Beastling Redback, which focused on Military Operations in urban terrain.

The detachment also participated in Nato Flexible Deterrence Options and operated with forces from eight nations.

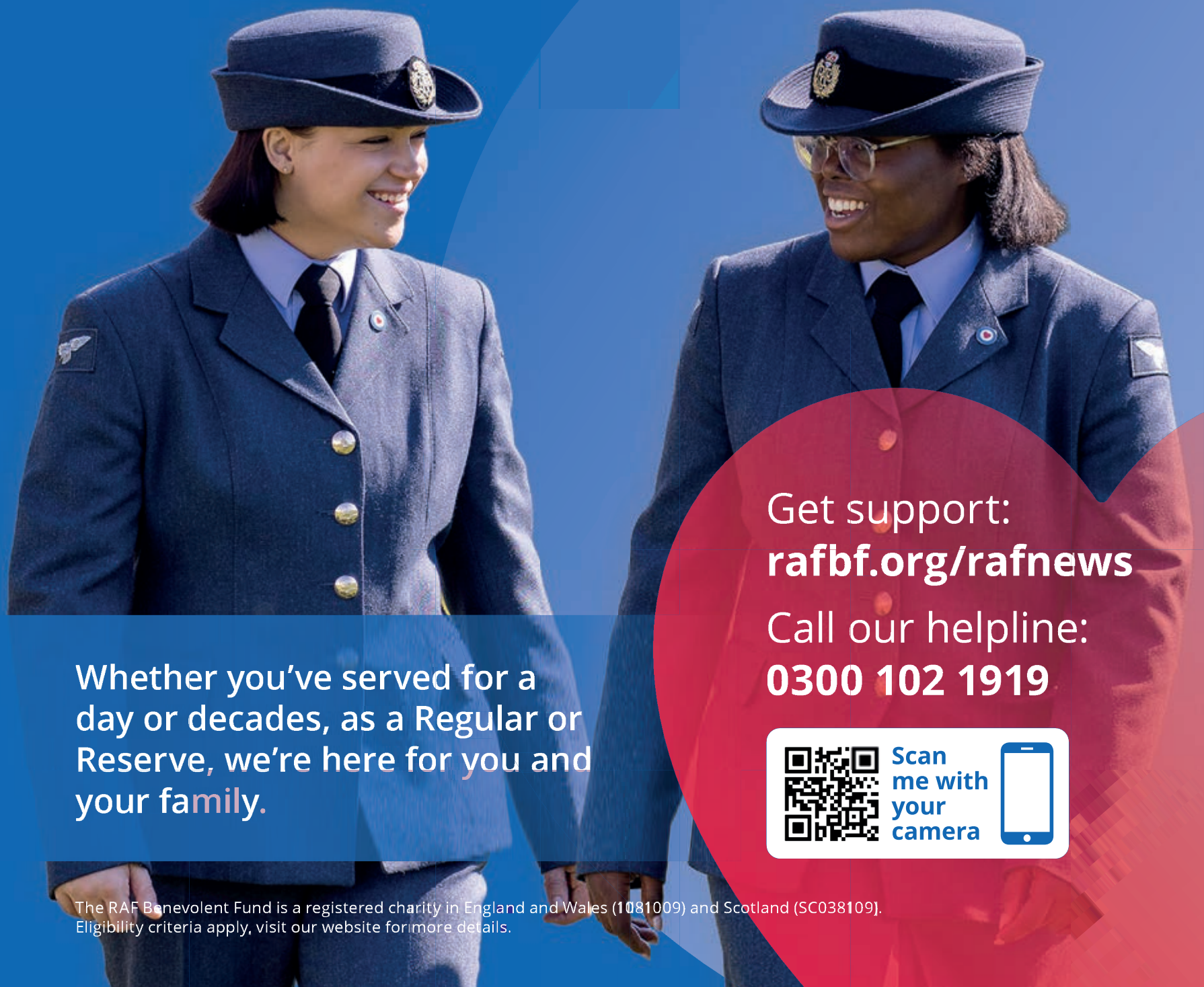


HANDOVER: 121 EAW Commander, Wg Cdr Wicks-Randy, welcomes his Spanish counterpart as Typhoons complete latest NATO duties in Romania



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Tonka trio give Marham a Luft

Staff Reporter

FAMILIES DAY crowds enjoyed a blast from the past courtesy of the Luftwaffe at Marham.

The Norfolk base, now home to the F-35 Lightning, welcomed a German Air Force Tornado. It's been seven years since the legendary mud mover, nicknamed 'Tonka,' last flew into Marham when, in 2019, the final RAF hedge hopper of its type touched down ending nearly 40 years of active



service for the iconic swing-wing aircraft.

Weapons Systems Operator Sqn Ldr Bamber, still based at Marham, said: "It was fantastic to see a Tornado back.

"It took me right back to the last time I flew in a GR4, when we brought the jet home for the very final time.

"Seeing a Tornado fly into our Families Day will have brought back a lot of fond memories for many of our personnel, their families and people across the local area."



Channel triumph

Simon Mander

ELITE AIR Force swimmer Sqn Ldr Nic Mackay completed a solo swim across the English Channel after 10 hours 18 minutes.

She is one of fewer than 60 successful competitors this season, completing the feat exactly 100 years after American Gertrude Ederle became the first woman to make the journey in 1926.

Widely regarded as one of the toughest endurance challenges on the planet, the English Channel poses unpredictable weather, strong tides, freezing water and intense mental pressure.

Sqn Ldr Mackay said: "I pushed my limits with this challenge – the chafing was intense, the icy water blistered my skin, and bits of my tongue were raw by the end.

"I was both mentally and physically exhausted, but proud of what I achieved."

The Honington Deputy Station Commander faced choppy seas, powerful

currents and jellyfish stings during the 24.8-mile swim

Less than 2,800 people worldwide have achieved a certified solo Channel crossing.

Nic's put in years of training and ramped up her routine over the past seven months to complete the challenge

These included a boot camp in Croatia immersed in sea water as cold as 12 degrees and the British Long Distance Swimming Association Champion of Champions event, where Sqn Ldr Mackay swam nine miles in chilling 13.8°C conditions

She also took on the 'Swim to the Sunset' in Lake Coniston in Cumbria, where she clocked up 30km in 12 hours.

Her Channel bid required navigating the world's busiest shipping lane, sharing the water with enormous commercial vessels, naval ships and international maritime traffic.



SQN LDR NIC MACKAY

BFSAI war games

Staff Reporter

Falkland Islands

TYPHOONS JOINED Army ground troops and Air Force communications specialists during the latest live firing combat training in the South Atlantic.

A swing-role combat jet deployed with 905 Expeditionary Air Wing joined the 5th Battalion of the Rifles and the Falklands Islands Defence Force as part of Exercise Cape Upholder.

The British Forces South

Atlantic Islands (BFSAI) multi-phase training included live firing from mortars, snipers and machine guns during a section attack to take key enemy positions with Simulated Close Air Support from the Typhoon.

Four fighters with 1435 Flight maintain round-the-clock Quick Reaction Alert readiness to police and protect airspace over the Falkland Islands, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.



MORTAR ATTACK:

Army's 5th Battalion Rifles dig in during Cape Upholder. Inset left, Typhoon during low-level sortie



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Bulletin



Move on

AIR FORCE MOVERS have relocated to MOD Boscombe Down due to infrastructure improvements at Brize Norton.

It's part of a programme to maintain operations while the runway is resurfaced at the Oxfordshire station, which has seen RAF units dispersed across the UK.

Personnel from 1 Air Mobility Wing deliver air movements across the globe and support strategic airlift operations, humanitarian assistance and operational deployments.

1 AMW CO Wg Cdr Christopher Turnbull said: "Relocating allows us to maintain operational output while supporting vital infrastructure improvements at Brize Norton."

Odiham Thunder storm



AIR ASSAULT: Chinooks take to the sky during staged rocket and missile attack on Odiham
PHOTO: AS1 LEAH JONES



CHINOOK CREWS launched air assault drills alongside the Army's 3 Para unit to hone their battlefield skills under realistic combat conditions.

The Chinook squadrons flew into the simulated war zone to extract ground troops and supplies under rocket and missile attack from aggressor units at Odiham during Exercise Greyhound Thunder.

Counter measures included ultra-low-level flying reducing exposure to

detection and engagement while operating under minimal communications.

A White Force team of Air Traffic Controllers and Intelligence Officers acted as referees and delivered honest, evidence-based debriefs during complex training programmes designed to simulate an enemy attack on a sovereign base.

The Hampshire station is a frontline support helicopter base working within the Joint Aviation Command providing rapid support for UK military operations throughout the world and home to three Chinook squadrons.



AIR FORCE mover Gp Capt Rob Croft has taken over command at Lossiemouth from Gp Capt Sarah Brewin.

The outgoing Station Commander oversaw visits by the King, the Prime Minister and US President Donald Trump.

Gp Capt Croft said: "There is important work ahead. Together, we will ensure Lossiemouth continues to fully deliver its

mission, enabling air power projection from this key airbase."

Gp Capt Croft arrives from Episkopi, where he was the Assistant Chief of Staff at the HQ British Forces Cyprus.

He has served on deployments to Iraq, Afghanistan and the Middle East and commanded a Movements Unit at Brize Norton, and the Logistics Wing at Akrotiri.

Hiroshima vigil for UK crews in Japan

Simon Mander

OLD ENEMIES came together on the site of history's most devastating air attack during a recent trip to Japan.

Eleven members of Odiham's 27 Squadron took part in a seven-day visit to the Japanese 1st Helicopter Brigade and visited Hiroshima.

AS1 (T) Mackenzie Dawson said: "Walking through the Peace Memorial Museum before standing beneath the Atomic Bomb Dome offered a perspective that is difficult to put into words."

"Reading about the events of August 1945 is one thing; standing at the site itself is something entirely different."

Despite operating in different environments, the RAF contingent found much in common with their fellow CH-47 operators and 27 Sqn hope to continue building upon their professional relationship.



"Beyond the military engagement, the team explored the vibrant streets of Tokyo to visit the ancient temples and shrines," said AS1 (T) Ben Hoyle. Among the most memorable sights were Kyoto's historic temples and the seemingly endless rows of vibrant

orange torii gates at Fushimi Inari Taisha, which offered a striking contrast to the modern skylines encountered elsewhere during the trip."

The Japanese hosted the Squadron, providing an overview of their aircraft roles.

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Our urgent plea to PM

TV stars join calls for action to

tackle UK's veterans crisis

Simon Mander

CELEBRITIES AND military chiefs have teamed up to call on Andy Burnham to improve veterans support.

Actor Ross Kemp and presenter Lorraine Kelly have joined former British Army chief Lord Richard Dannatt to back an open letter issued by charity Help for Heroes.

In a powerful personal appeal to the PM, the letter states: 'As a nation, we have made a promise that no one would be disadvantaged because they served our nation.'

'Many veterans, particularly those injured while serving, are still denied the quality healthcare, financial security and support they need and deserve. We are failing to deliver on this promise.'

“Our Armed Forces are the backbone of our society. As a nation we must do better”

Adding her name to the petition, Lorraine Kelly said: "How a nation supports its veterans and their families speaks volumes, and I believe we are a nation that passionately values and supports those who have served. This is why I'm proud to back this open letter."

SAS veteran and novelist Andy McNab, *Coronation Street* actor Antony Cotton, writer and broadcaster Tom Newton Dunn and columnist Jane Moore are also supporters.

Among the military personnel supporting the call for action is former Chinook technician Clare Keating who was medically discharged from the RAF, and despite facing



PLEDGE: Lord Dannatt

blindness has competed in the Invictus Games.

Antony Cotton said: "I have spoken to too many veterans, and their families, who tell me that they still struggle to access the healthcare or compensation that they need to pick up their lives after service."

"Our Armed Forces are the backbone of our society, and as a nation we must do better."

Campaigners say investing in veterans promotes national security and calls on the Government to

honour the Armed Forces Covenant pledge that no one would be disadvantaged by their service.

Help for Heroes reports a 30 per cent rise in demand for its services over the past year.

Charity chief James Needham added: "Many veterans, particularly those injured while serving, are still denied the quality healthcare, financial security and support they need and deserve."

Members of the public, employers, MPs, and the Armed Forces community are invited to sign the open letter before it is presented to

10 Downing Street next month.

Former Chief of the Defence Staff Lord Richard Dannatt said: "Now is the time for all of us to hold ourselves to the promise we made."



FORCES SUPPORT: Long-standing military campaigner *Coronation Street* actor Antony Cotton (left) has signed the petition, as have Ross Kemp and Lorraine Kelly (above)

Bulletin



Reds date

SUPPORTERS OF the RAF Museum this summer are invited to take the Red Arrows Challenge.

Participants can walk, run or cycle their way to raising vital funds and get an exclusive, limited-edition commemorative coin as a reward.

A British Aerospace Hawk T1A flown by the Red Arrows will be going on permanent display in the Museum's forthcoming exhibition *The RAF: 1980 to Today*.

Museum Development Manager Sophie Wallace said: "Whether you're completing your first 5km or taking on a cycling challenge, every mile completed, and every pound raised will help ensure the extraordinary stories of the Red Arrows continue to inspire future generations."

Everyone who registers will receive fundraising advice, and those who raise £50 or more will also receive a special Red Arrows pack.

Top adult and family fundraisers will each win tickets to the RAF Air Show in June 2027, including a chance to meet the team.

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

● Go to: rafmuseum.org.

Go Signal

SIGNALLERS deployed to Northolt to conduct urgent repairs to the station's Air Traffic Control Tower.

Personnel from Leeming's 144 Signals Unit worked alongside the west London airbase's ground crew to keep its jets airborne.

Normally based at Boulmer and NATS Swanwick, the team operates across the UK responsible for equipment availability, engineering assurance, technical training, cyber security, maintenance data management, and deployable capability.

Its Expeditionary Radar and Airfield Squadron supports deployable radar, navigation, and airfield systems.

News

Wittering Ironmen show their mettle

Simon Mander

A BIT of banter at Wittering turned into a charity challenge at the Cambridgeshire airbase.

Strongmen from the station will be attempting Operation Iron Push in aid of an anti-suicide charity.

2MT Sqn Sgt Declan Walsh said: “We were chatting, having a laugh, throwing around ideas when someone joked, ‘Imagine pushing a gym sled a marathon distance’. Everyone laughed.

“But within days, what had started as a throwaway comment had completely taken on a life of its own. The idea gathered momentum incredibly quickly.

“More people wanted to get involved, the planning started, and before we knew it, we weren’t just talking about it, we weren’t just talking about it anymore, we were committed to making it happen.”

The team chose to raise money for the Campaign Against Living Miserably, which seeks to challenge the stigma around mental health.



TOUGH ENOUGH: Wittering team putting their strength to the test for charity. Use the QR code to sponsor them

“Too often, men feel they have to bottle things up, carry the weight alone and never show vulnerability,” said Sgt Walsh. “These outdated attitudes

continue to have devastating consequences, and suicide continues to affect far too many families, friends, colleagues and communities.

“If our challenge can raise funds to encourage one person to start a conversation, every single metre we push that sled will have been worth it.”



Family first

RAF FAMILIES with children who have special educational needs are being cared for by a new group at Marham.

Parents Sophie Allport and WO Chris Daykin, who have first-hand experience of the challenges military personnel face over special educational needs, have launched a new social service at the Norfolk airbase.

WO Daykin said: “The SEN group has been invaluable to our family. It has provided friendship, support and reassurance during challenging times, helping us feel connected and understood within the military community.”

Backed by Armed Forces charity SSAFA, the group, which meets once a month, sits outside of chain of command and provides a safe space for families to offer peer support, organisers said.

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Canada posting

AIR COMMODORE Liz Hutchison has been appointed the new Defence Adviser to Canada.

She joined the RAF in 1997 and has served in Iraq and Afghanistan, commanded Gibraltar's airbase and been Defence Attaché to Chile.

Bromley nets gold

BROMLEY FC has been awarded the Armed Forces Covenant Gold Award for supporting serving personnel, veterans, reservists, cadet force adult volunteers and military families.

The club runs a Veterans Hub, free weekly Military Veterans Football programme, along with employment initiatives for Service leavers and military families.

Space ace shoots for the stars

Tracey Allen

AIR FORCE space ace Sgt Lucy-Ann Reed is aiming for the stars with her debut novel after making the shortlist for a prestigious literary prize.

The Air and Space Operations manager beat nearly 2,000 aspiring writers in competition for the Libraro prize for first-time writers with her fantasy tale *The Lost Zodiac*, only to lose out on a publishing deal in the final round.

Now she's launching her own publishing firm with a nod to her military service – Moon Poppy Press – and will publish the book in February 2027.

It will be available in various formats including paperback, ebook and hard copy signed special edition and she is also working on an audio book, to be read by an award-winning narrator whose name she is keeping under wraps for now.

Lucy, who writes as TJ Windwood, said: "It's been a bit of a wild ride since I was nominated for the prize. I'm currently using every spare minute to organise publication as well as writing the second book in what is a four-part series.

"It's hard work but it's all worth it. The bestselling author Joanne Harris [chair of the Libraro prize judges] has allowed me to use a quote from her on the book's cover and Libraro have invited me to join their new writers advisory board."

The Lost Zodiac is described as a gripping fantasy about a world in peril, which takes inspiration from Sgt Reed's professional experience. It blends militarised training, zodiac mythology and slow-burn romance in a world where memory is the price of power.

Lucy explained: "The book is 'romantasy', a genre blend – at its core it's a fantasy but it has a romantic element to it. It's 'upper YA (Young Adult)' and can cross over into adult fiction. I've been getting a lot of interest about it on my social media."

She added: "I'm working with a company who work a lot with independent publishers, on delivering a concept for the book's cover as well as chapter headers/scene dividers, character art, promotional assets, and much more."

● Go to: tjwindwood.com to sign up for Lucy's newsletter.



RISING STAR: Sgt Reed is hoping to storm the bestsellers list with her fantasy debut

Fund steps up support for Air Force families

Simon Mander

THOUSANDS OF Forces personnel and their families were helped by the RAF Benevolent Fund last year according to new research.

The charity supported more than 33,600 members and delivered assistance in 28 countries worldwide, reaching beneficiaries ranging in age from three months to 103 years old.

It helped 16,189 serving personnel and their families, 17,452 veterans and the bereaved received dedicated support.

More than 52,000 people benefited from community and station-based activities.

The Benevolent Fund's Chief Executive, AVM Chris Elliot, said: "Our latest Impact Report reflects the difference we made together to the RAF Family during 2025.

"Behind every statistic is a

person, family or veteran who received the support they needed and what stands out for me is the impact timely support can have on people's lives.

"Whether that is financial assistance, help with wellbeing, or simply knowing that someone is there when times are tough, members of the RAF Family never have to face challenges alone."

The Fund enabled 3,570 people to live more independently through mobility and housing solutions and its Benefits Advice team helped individuals access £2.34 million in unclaimed entitlements.

A total of 13,579 people were supported through services including counselling, community

connections, and youth support programmes.

The Fund's youth programme supported 1,953 children and young people and assisted in maintaining continuity during family relocations.

The RAF Benevolent Fund invested £16.8 million in welfare services in 2025.

It has been supporting the RAF Family for 107 years with financial, practical and emotional help.

● Go to: rafbf.org for more information.



FORCES SUPPORT: The RAF Benevolent Fund has helped thousands of Service personnel through a range of programmes including the Air Play scheme aimed at youngsters living on military bases across the world



GP CAPT Louise Henton took a bow at Brize Norton this month – leaving the station for the last time in style in an Aston Martin sports car.

She handed over command

to Gp Capt Kate Macartney during a ceremony at Brize – which delivers air mobility, air-to-air refuelling and aeromedical evacuation operations around the world.

Peter's stroke



PICTURE PERFECT: Colin Bell, DFC



CAS: ACM Sir Harv Smyth



INSPIRATION: Former Memorial Flight pilot Sqn Ldr Mark Long



BBMF ENGINEER: Sgt Kat Moir



FORMER RAFVR: Artist, pilot and aviation fan Peter Binks

Enthusiast's pilot portraits raise cash for disabled charity honouring BBMF pilot Mark Long

SPECIALISING AS an aviation portrait painter allows former RAF Volunteer Reservist Peter Binks to combine his two passions – flying and art.

In the past two and a half years, the former Flt Lt has produced more than 55 portraits of Battle of Britain Memorial Flight members, to be sold in aid of the Mark Long Trust. The BBMF's Sqn Ldr Long (pictured *inset right*) was tragically killed in a Spitfire crash in 2024. The Trust's mission is to empower disabled people by giving them opportunities to experience aviation.

A former head of art and design at a private school in Kent for 20 years, Peter now lives in Lincolnshire and flies a former RAF Chipmunk out of Wickenby Aerodrome.

RAF Coningsby

He said: "Lincolnshire is the home of the RAF so Cranwell, Waddington and Coningsby are on my doorstep, with my favourite, the BBMF."

He's also painted portraits of Red Arrows personnel – some have already been sold and others will be sold in the near future to raise money for the RAF Benevolent Fund.

He explained: "I've been a big fan of the Reds since childhood and to be involved in a very small way, doing portraits, having them on display,



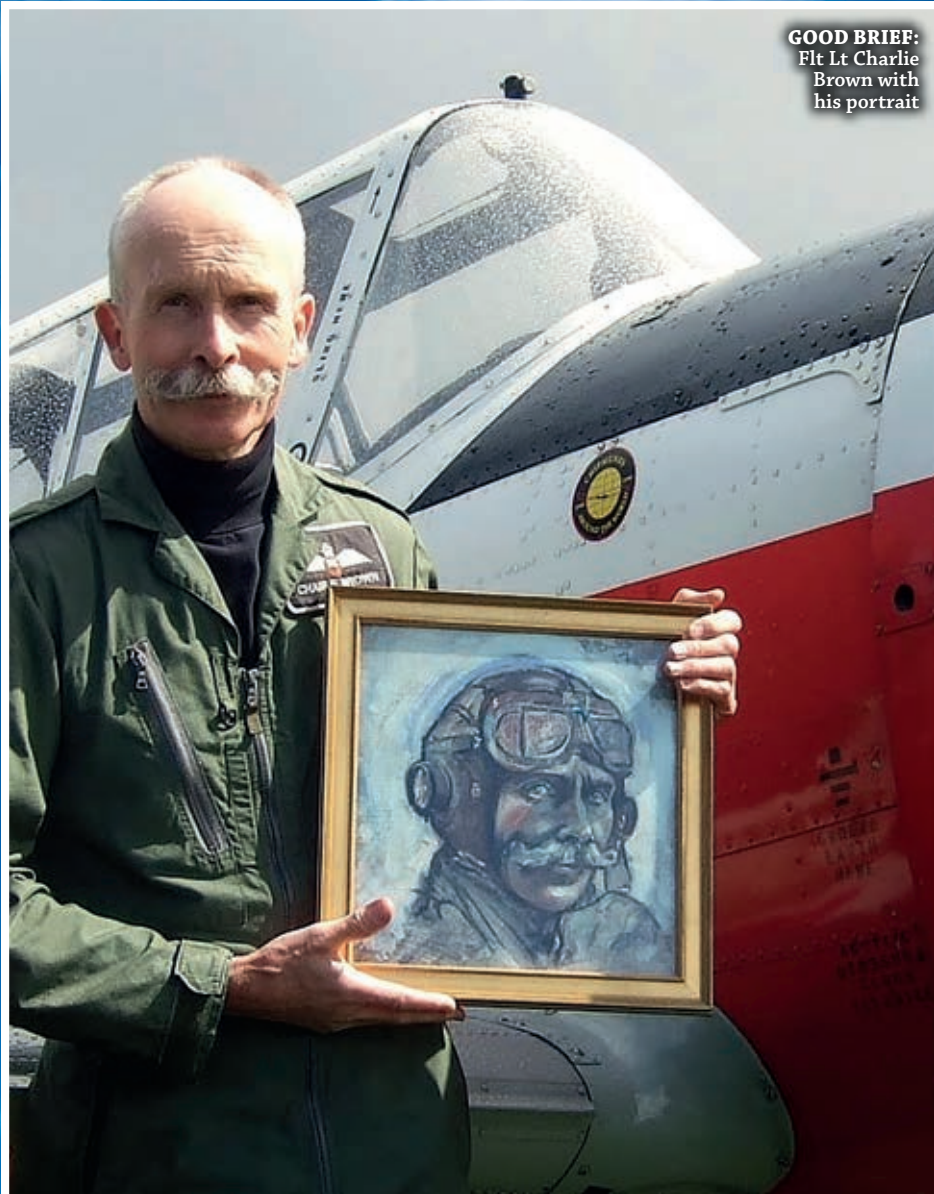
PICTURE BOOKLETS: Peter's portraits have been printed in three brochures raising money for the Mark Long Trust

meeting personnel past and present, has been a real joy."

Flying the Chipmunk was what led Peter to start his portraits of the Red Arrows.

He said: "The guy who checked me out on the Chipmunk

kes of genius



GOOD BRIEF:
Flt Lt Charlie Brown with his portrait



EX-BBMF: Antony 'Parky' Parkinson, who went on to work for Spitfire flight experience company Aero Legends in Kent, also had his portrait painted by Peter

was a former Arrows Team Leader, Sqn Ldr John Rands. John had auctioned his flying suit and helmet for charity and said he had nothing left to auction, so I offered to do his portrait."

John is featured in Peter's booklet of Red Arrows portraits, along with Team Leaders from the 60s to the present. The artist has also produced a booklet of his BBMF portraits and one of paintings of pilots, which includes portraits of CAS, ACM Sir Harv Smyth, Iron Maiden lead singer Bruce Dickinson and 105-year-old Mosquito pilot Flt Lt Colin Bell. All three booklets are for sale to raise funds for the Mark Long Trust.

70th anniversary

Peter said he first set out to do 27 BBMF portraits to celebrate the Memorial Flight's 70th anniversary in 2027.

"It's snowballed now and if they all sell we're looking at raising some worthwhile funds for the Mark Long Trust," he explained.

OC BBMF, Sqn Ldr Paul 'Ernie' Wise, said: "Peter's dedication to his art and aviation, alongside his strong commitment to supporting the Mark Long Trust, is truly admirable. By combining his talent with a passion for raising essential funds, he is making a valuable contribution. It is

hoped that the proceeds from his artwork will help advance the important work the Mark Long Trust strives to accomplish."

And Sqn Ldr Mark Sugden, the Trust's chairman, said: "We extend our heartfelt thanks to Peter for his generosity and dedication to our cause. His creativity and fundraising efforts will significantly help disadvantaged individuals gain confidence through aviation experiences. We are hopeful that the proceeds from his artwork will play an important role in supporting the goals we are deeply passionate about achieving."

Peter said: "I'm really pleased that CAS loves his portrait. I had a nice letter from him saying he was delighted with it and it had passed his wife and daughters' test, they liked it too."

It was painted from a photograph and, although trained to work from life, Peter said he's equally comfortable with either method. He also likes to make an initial sketch of the sitter from life, if possible, then take his own photos. The Bruce Dickinson painting was done from photos the rock star supplied himself.

What he calls his 'first serious aviation portrait' – of ARCO and Aero Legends pilot Flt Lt Charlie Brown, is another highlight of Peter's *Pilot Portraits* series.

"I exhibited it at The Mall Galleries in London in an aviation painting show, wrote to Charlie to tell him it was on display and he wrote back to tell me he had bought it,

then he commissioned a portrait of his wife. He suggested other pilots to paint and that got the ball rolling."

Peter cited Cuthbert Orde as his aviation portrait hero – Orde produced exquisite work portraying the Battle of Britain pilots of 1940. Peter explained: "They are so poignant because so many of them were lost, killed in action days or even hours after their portraits were done. He might have had only 20 minutes to draw them. As an artist he's fantastic – such a draughtsman."

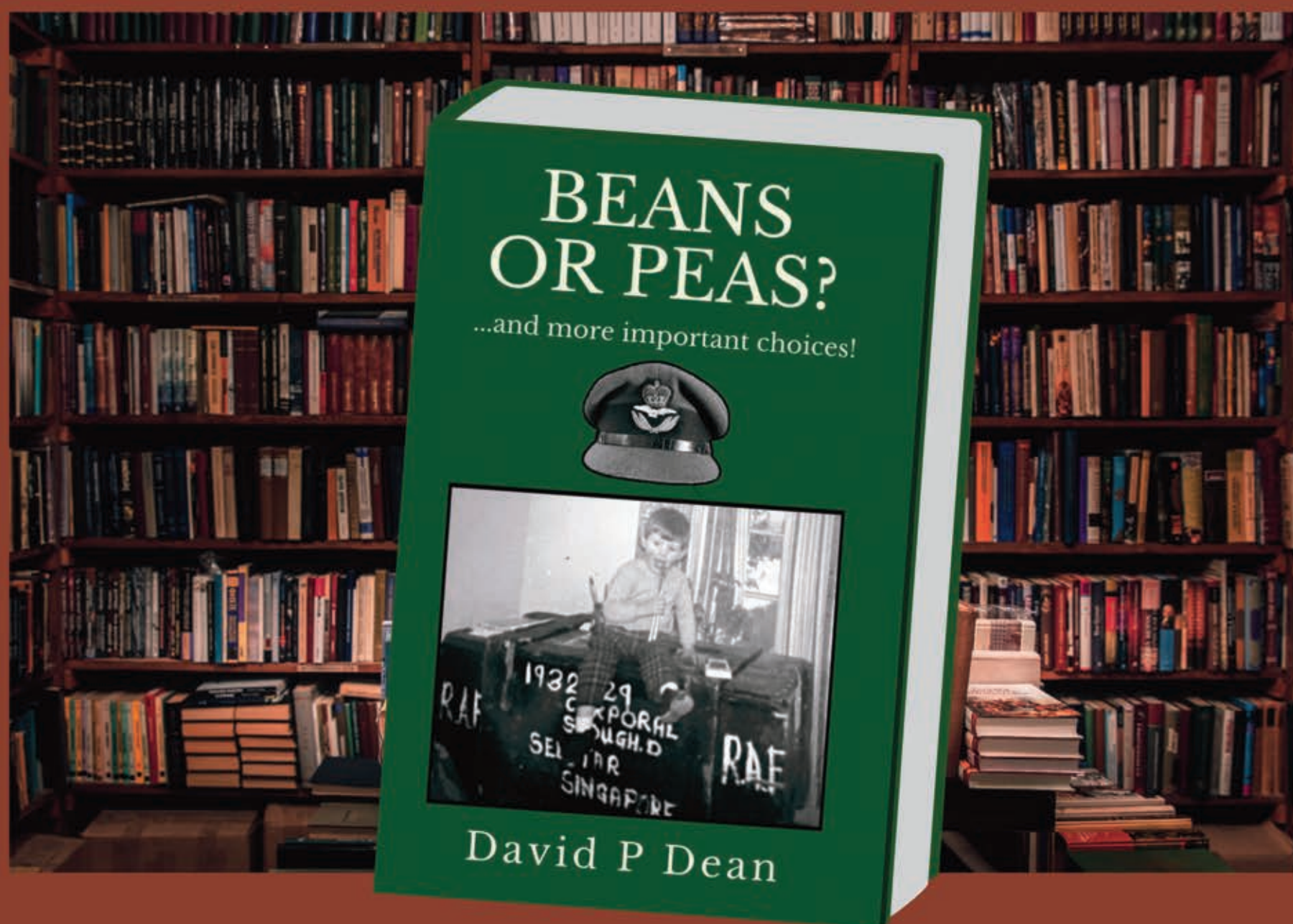
Flt Lt Colin Bell

Peter says his favourite aviation portrait of all his subjects is that of World War II veteran Flt Lt Colin Bell.

"Colin was invited to a BBMF dining-in night and was staying at the Petwood Hotel, which was the Officers' Mess for 617 Sqn in WWII. The portrait was delivered to the hotel and put in his room. He was overjoyed and it now has pride of place in his home.

"That felt great. That's the best thing about doing portraits, when you get that really positive reaction – it's fantastic."

● The limited edition booklets are £12 each or all three for £30, plus postage. Email: Peterbinks12@gmail.com to order.



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

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

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

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

A testimonial to enduring love

A whopping 600 pages!

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Join the club

Call to female RAF officers and veterans

ESTABLISHED IN 1955, the Association of RAF Women Officers (ARAFWO) provides a network for serving and former women officers to maintain their connection with the Royal Air Force and with one another.

It offers members the opportunity to make new connections, enjoy renewed comradeship, or reconnect with old friends and treasured memories.

A spokeswoman said: "Whatever your experience, ARAFWO offers friendship, support and fellowship to women officers at every stage of life and service."

"Through events and activities across the UK and overseas, we help ensure that women who have served remain connected, supported and valued. From our Annual Reunion Weekend to visits to historic RAF locations such as Malta, Kraków and the D-Day Landing Beaches, together with day trips, regional gatherings, and online events, we



MALTA: Members on recent trip abroad

provide opportunities to maintain the unique bonds forged through service in the Royal Air Force."

She added: "We also work closely with strategic partners to ensure that women veterans are recognised and prioritised in areas such as health, wellbeing and social care. By engaging with key organisations and decision-

makers, we help ensure that the voices of our members continue to be heard at local, national and governmental levels.

"Our priority is to provide an Association that meets the needs of its members while continually strengthening its services, influence and impact."

The ARAFWO now has more than 350 serving and former RAF women officers as members across the UK and worldwide.

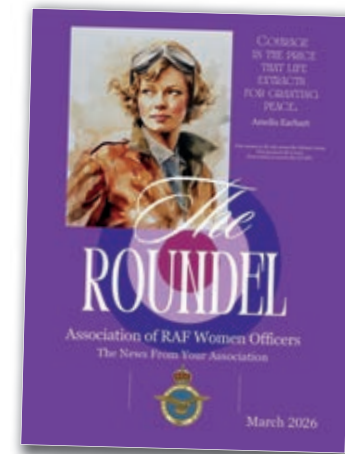
Network

The spokeswoman explained: "While women are now fully integrated throughout the RAF, ARAFWO continues to provide a unique professional and social network. Members consistently report increased confidence, stronger communication skills, valuable mentoring opportunities, and enduring professional relationships."

"Our membership encompasses every stage of service and retirement, from Officer Cadets and junior officers to retired Air Marshals.



57 SQN DINING IN NIGHT: (l-r) Sqn Ldr Jane Mannering, Air Cdre Wendy Rothery and Sqn Ldr Sue Arnold



THE ROUND: Association's eMag

"Our Chair, Air Cdre Wendy Rothery, warmly invites you to make ARAFWO your

professional and social home."

Membership costs £10 annually and includes 12 issues a year of The Roundel eMagazine, The Gazette – the ARAFWO Annual Yearbook, invitations to reunions, holidays, day visits and social events, access to the members-only ARAFWO Facebook community, opportunities to build lifelong friendships and professional networks and membership of a unique and supportive sisterhood, the spokeswoman added.

The membership year runs from January 1 to 31 December 31.

● **Contact Membership Secretary Carol Honeybun Kelly** vemail: MemSecARAFWO@gmail.com; tel: 07721 509365 and see: ARAFWO.co.uk

Halifax Romania oil raid dead honoured

Martin Wade

PATHFINDERS WHO died in raids on Nazi oil refineries have been honoured 82 years on.

Seven crewmen died in a raid on Ploesti in 1944 when two Halifaxes were shot down. Now Reservist driver and fellow squadron member AS1 Jon Bridge, with Typhoons on Op Biloxi in Romania, visited the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in Bucharest, where the crew are buried.

He said: "The 614 (County of Glamorgan) Sqn was then operating in the highly specialised Pathfinder role – the only RAF squadron to do so outside the UK."

"Targets near the capital Bucharest were among the most heavily defended in Europe and bomber crews paid a heavy price."

"A raid on August 9 against the Romana Americana oil refinery was particularly costly and seven of 614's aircrew were killed when their two Halifaxes were shot down."

Eyewitness Wellington pilot FS Norman Lord said: "The searchlights were like rows of a picket fence, and we were crazy enough to fly in amongst them



REMEMBRANCE: AS1 Bridge lays a wreath at grave

PHOTO: AS1 LEWIS WILD

while trying to pinpoint our target."

He saw a four-engine bomber trapped by 'a blue-beamed searchlight' and surrounded.

"He became the centre of a concentrated ack-ack attack the like of which I never saw before, or again for that matter. They were blasted out of the sky in a matter of 30 seconds," said Mr Lord.

One of her crew survived but six were killed: pilot Flt Lt Robert Douglas Langton, navigator Fg Off Thomas Joseph Rogerson

Turner, flight engineer FS Herbert George Jones, tail gunner FS John William Clarke and bomb-aimers FS Peter Brunton and Plt Off Walter Joseph Martyn.

Another Halifax was hit and set on fire by a Ju 88 which continued to sit behind the burning aircraft firing into it.

A Wellington dived onto the German and opened fire from its nose turret. The guns had been loaded with day tracer and the ensuing firework display so



DAMAGED: Halifax JP225 after raid and, inset, tail gunner FS William Clarke

unnerved the night-fighter that it broke away.

The Halifax crew bailed out but navigator WO Harry Bath was killed.

Six crew from these two aircraft survived and were captured by the enemy and held as prisoners of war.

A third Halifax, piloted by Fg Off Bruce Prange, was hit by anti-aircraft fire which ignited one of their target-marking bombs. With his aircraft on fire and holes blasted through the nose and belly of the bomber, he ordered the crew to put on parachutes.

Four of the crew bailed out but

with the help of bomb-aimer WO Al Fox, they extinguished the fires and Prange managed to fly their severely damaged aircraft back to base in Italy.

For their bravery they were both awarded the DFC. The four who bailed out survived and became prisoners of war.

AS1 Bridge, who laid a wreath and poppy crosses at their graves, said: "I'm proud to be able to pay tribute in Bucharest to fellow members of 614 Sqn. It was emotional seeing the seven graves here and to think about their sacrifice. It's something that I'll never forget."



'A terrific storyteller'
BOOKLIST

'A pulse-pounding adventure'
PUBLISHERS WEEKLY



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

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Images: BFBS/British Esports/Jonas Kontautas

My Dad, Second World War ace

THIS IS a biography written by a son about his father. He is uniquely qualified to offer personal and professional insights, as both were accomplished RAF pilots.

In *Teddy Peacock-Edwards: Battle of Britain Pilot and Second World War Ace* (grubstreet.co.uk) Rick Peacock-Edwards' admiration for his father is evident. He also tells a riveting wartime story.

Spencer Ritchie 'Teddy' Peacock-Edwards grew up in interwar Rhodesia and South Africa, before spending four years with the Rhodesian Railway Company. At one stage, he wanted to be a train driver. However, he left the office for the air rather than the rails. He applied to the Air Force and was one of the first 11 candidates selected in Southern Rhodesia by an RAF Board.

Fairey Battle

At 22, Teddy commenced his RAF flying training in Hampshire in March 1938, overcoming the miserable British weather. In December, he was posted to 150 Sqn at Boscombe Down, flying the ineffective Fairey Battle light bomber.

When war came, the squadron was transferred to France as part of the Advanced Air Striking Force (AASF). Teddy's letters to his sister in Rhodesia provide a vivid snapshot of the 'Phoney War', highlighting operations, his impressions of France and famous visitors, notably the entertainer Gracie Fields.

The Germans attacked on May 10, 1940. Low-level attacks on bridges and German columns led to half of the AASF's Battles being lost by May 15. Battle squadrons

were withdrawn from daylight operations. Teddy's subsequent flying in France involved night bombing sorties.

In mid-June, the remnants of 150 Sqn flew back to Britain. Although involved in subsequent squadron operations, Teddy answered the appeal for pilots from Fighter Command. He trained with 615 Sqn at Prestwick, first flying a Hurricane on September 4.

On the famous 15th of September, he entered the Battle of Britain, with 253 Sqn at Kenley. He was one of The Few and claimed German aircraft in October, as well as later in November and December.

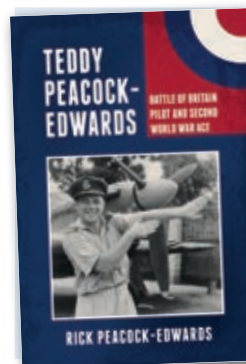
In January 1941, Teddy was transferred to Malta, via Africa and Egypt. Here he flew Hurricanes with 261 Sqn. His successes against the Luftwaffe continued. He destroyed four aircraft and damaged another. But on April 13 his badly damaged Hurricane crash landed at Hal Far and was written-off. An unhurt Teddy returned to the cockpit the next day.

However, Hurricane losses mounted. The aircraft was outmatched by Messerschmitt Bf109s patrolling from Sicily. Against bombers, the Hurricanes were more effective. The author describes the 'terrible battering' 261 Sqn endured. Only improvisation and the cannibalisation of airframes kept it operational. The surviving personnel were relieved to leave Malta in May 1941.

After Teddy's RAF baptism of fire, he earned a month of rest in Rhodesia and South Africa. He returned to Egypt in July 1941 but missed flying, being bored with his ground instructor role. He wanted a 'real job of work again'. His prayers were



FIGHTER PILOT: Teddy in his Hurricane in Ceylon



Copies of the book to be won

WE HAVE copies of this excellent title up for grabs. For your chance to win one, tell us:

When was Teddy Peacock-Edwards awarded the DFC?

Email your answer, marked **Teddy Peacock-Edwards 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 September 18. Please include your full postal address.

Win!

answered. In February 1942, he headed east to another island – Ceylon.

The island was braced for a Japanese attack or even invasion when 258 Sqn's Hurricanes arrived. On April 5, Easter Sunday, Japanese carrier-based aircraft mounted a devastating attack. While some dive bombers were picked off by the Hurricanes, the accompanying Zero fighters were a different matter, as Teddy discovered.

Chased by enemy fighters, Teddy crash landed in a paddy field. He woke up amidst a pile of wreckage and clambered for cover to evade a Zero circling overhead. Taken to hospital with shrapnel wounds, an iconic photograph shows him leaving later that day wearing a hospital sari, a bandage around his head and his trademark cigarette wedged in his mouth.

Ceylon

On Ceylon, Teddy married the daughter of the owners of a tea estate and remained on the island until early 1944, being awarded the DFC in December 1942. He commanded 30 Sqn from February 1943, including service in Bengal and Burma.

He returned to the UK in summer 1944, serving at various units and enjoying flying aircraft including the Mosquito, Beaufighter, Oxford, Halifax, Wellington, Anson and Dakota. A short stint in the new Southern Rhodesian Air Force followed in 1946-47 but he returned



WHAT A DRAG: Teddy puffs on a cigarette as he leaves hospital in Ceylon after being shot down, April 1941

to the UK in 1947.

Teddy had another decade in the RAF at locations across England. Nevertheless, on his retirement from the RAF in 1957 as a Sqn Ldr, he moved to South Africa to work in business.

This is a fascinating biography which is extensively sourced and well-illustrated. It is a fitting tribute to a father from his son.

Review by Alastair Noble



MALTA: Teddy was shot down and crash landed at Hal Far airfield in Hurricane V7472 on April 13, 1942



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REMEMBRANCE: 55 wreaths were laid during the service (also below)



FLYPAST:
Hurricane

Bomber Command 90 tribute



“Today is about the lads who never made it back”

Bertram Hammond, 101

WORLD WAR II veterans, senior RAF commanders and cadets gathered to celebrate the sixth International Bomber Command Day at the International Bomber Command Centre (IBCC) in Lincoln last month.

This year's service of remembrance also marked the division's 90th anniversary. Organised by the IBCC, the annual service provides an opportunity for the RAF community and the wider public to remember the sacrifices made by the 58,000 men and women who lost their lives during WWII. Nicky Van Der Drift, Chief Executive of the IBCC, said: "International Bomber Command Day honours the courage, sacrifice and resilience of everyone who served with Bomber Command throughout its history.

"This anniversary provides

an opportunity to remember not only those who flew operational sorties, but also the thousands who supported those operations on the ground.

"Many never returned home. We remember them, their families and all those who continue to preserve their legacy.

"The IBCC provides a powerful place for remembrance, recognition, reconciliation and education."

AM Allan Marshall added: "Ninety years ago this year, Bomber Command was formed. What followed was one of the most

remarkable and costly campaigns in the history of air power. The statistics merit repeating. Almost a million men and women served or supported the Command, drawn from more than 60 nations. Of the 125,000 aircrew – over 55,000 never came home.

"I think it's fair to say that Bomber Command veterans at the end of WWII were treated slightly differently to some of the other veterans. That has been changed since and I think everything we can do to recognise their service and their sacrifice is hugely important."

During the ceremony, 55 wreaths were laid by RAF

personnel, veterans, associations and youth organisations. There were flypasts by a Dakota and three Typhoons, as well as poems and readings by guests and IBCC trustees including Chairman of the IBCC ACM Sir Michael Graydon (inset left) and Losses Archivist Dave Gilbert.

The Bomber County Pipes and Drums led the standard bearers from the IBCC centre to the Memorial Spire and there were musical performances from the Mansfield and District Male Voice Choir and the trumpeter of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force Band, who played the *Last Post*.

Representatives from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) also attended with the Torch of Peace, a symbol of remembrance and hope which represents the enduring responsibility to carry forward the memory of all those who died in the world wars.

Bertram Hammond, aged 101, who flew 30 operations as an air gunner with 514 Squadron during WWII, said the ceremony was about remembering those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for the freedom we enjoy today.

"Today is about the lads who never made it back," he explained. "Just under 50 per cent never made it and they must be remembered. They are who I am representing here today, what this service is all about and what this centre is all about – remembering Bomber Command losses."

After the service, invited evening guests attended a drinks reception, a sunset ceremony and an evening meal sponsored by DEA Ltd.

● **Go to: internationalbcc.co.uk for more about the IBCC and its digital archive.**





Public enemy No.1

Forget the eco lobby, Golf R is built for big thrills

WITH ALMOST every manufacturer these days focusing more on travelling further on a single charge than producing fun motors to shatter lap times, it's rare to find a real bad boy. The Golf R is one of those rare examples.

Although it's a direct descendent of the 2002 Mk4 R32, the stonking V6 has long gone, replaced by a modern 2.0-litre four-cylinder turbo. The OTT power is down to a mere 333ps (still nuts) and much of the bad-boy formula remains. A twin-clutch automatic gearbox, paddle-shifts, four-wheel drive, torque vectoring and multiple exhaust pipes help it to feel like a car designed for life on the track. 0-62mph is achieved in 4.6s and it has a top end of 167mph (with the performance pack). 167mph? In a Golf? That's insane!

It has attitude and an edgy reputation that earns it respect from the most unexpected quarters. In fact, it's fair to say that most racer boys will leave it the hell alone. It's difficult to determine whether it's deference, or simply fear, but there's noticeable distance given on the road.

In a bizarre twist, it may also in part be down to the fact that this car has become a cult favourite with the criminal fraternity. Where there's a high-speed police pursuit, the bandit car will, these days, often be a Golf R. It's agile, practical and devilishly difficult to keep up with, joining the likes of the Focus RS and the Lotus Carlton in the getaway car hall of fame.

It's the fastest, most expensive Volkswagen Golf on the market and a well-polished, all-round package.

Exterior

The golden era of hot hatches, where you could buy a three-door bodysell, has sadly gone. It's five doors, or bust, but the latest Golf R looks mean.

Aggressive front bumpers, with mesh that exposes the radiators, give it an intimidating presence when it suddenly fills



AGGRESSIVE: Volkswagen's Golf R hot-hatch has muscular looks and 'Marmite' illuminated badge, inset

your rear-view mirror. The illuminated VW badge is a love it or hate it item but the rest of the car is a sleek spin on the classic Golf formula.

The new 19-inch alloy wheel design is a striking upgrade. Not only are the wheels an eye-catching revision, they also improve brake cooling.

Interior

The Golf R has a well-built cabin, that is exactly what generations of Golf GTi buyers have come to expect, with a twist. There's plenty of leg/head room, front and back, with 341 litres of space in the boot. The driving position is excellent, as ever.

Looking around the cabin, you notice that very little has changed with the car's mid-life facelift. You get new R-branded sports seats, shiny pedals, R floor mats, plenty of neon blue highlights and some actual carbon fibre trim. It's not gaudy, or chavvy, just a sporty upgrade to the rather grown-up interior of the regular Golf.

The biggest upgrade is the arrival of the latest VW infotainment hub, a 12.9-inch

screen with integrated volume and temperature 'sliders'. These are, finally, illuminated, so you can turn the heating on after dark! Better late than never, eh?

The infotainment system now reacts rapidly and graphics have been upgraded.

A quick downside to mention. The steering wheel is unchanged from the last car, with the irritating haptic touch-sensitive buttons still present. Turn a corner with any enthusiasm and, I guarantee, you'll find your music tracks changing, volume increasing and driving modes switching, whether you want them to, or not.

If you encounter a drug dealer, fleeing police, with Glenn Miller playing, full chat, this will probably be why!

On The Road

Putting the Golf R through its paces on winding mountain roads, you quickly start to appreciate the precision engineering. You can feel the rear axle working its magic, to recover pitch and grip when you push

it to the limits on undulating bends. Flat-out, power down out of a bend, lift-off and turn in to the next, the R is in its element. It flies and it's properly sorted. Agile and very, very fast on the open road.

It's a car that devours the tarmac, in all weathers, with a level of confidence and comfort that would rival legends like the Mitsubishi Evolution. The adaptive dampers add additional versatility to an already well set up, road-tuned racing machine.

What's more, it comes with toys. VW has added a 'Sport +' powertrain mode which allows you to thrash it, full-chat, into the rev-limiter, instead of the car changing gear for you. It also comes with 'Drift Mode', which allows the car to push power to the outside rear wheel and get the car sideways. The rear-end steps out with startling efficiency. It's an odd one though, because it requires a different technique to anything you'd use to perform regular drift moves. You'll love it, or hate it.

The Honda Civic Type R remains the benchmark hot hatch in this class, but the Golf R is a serious alternative. It's a focused performance machine that is terrifyingly fast yet, somehow, almost foolproof to drive.

VW Golf R

Pros

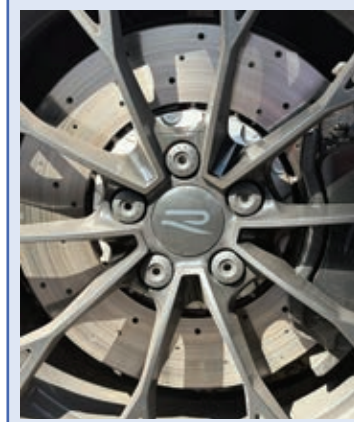
- Impressively rapid
- Comfortable on a run
- Handles well, with toys

Cons

- Expensive to buy
- Could be sharper
- Fiddly steering wheel controls

Verdict

The VW Golf R is an immensely capable machine, that delivers an impressive combination of speed and precision. It's not exactly cheap, but if this is, as it may be, VW's final petrol-powered lunatic, it's one hell of a last hurrah.



SEATS: Stylish



FOOTBALL



ON TARGET: Must be a 'Flight' Sergeant

Going for the treble with RAF football

AIRSHOW AND other outdoor events have been kicking it with the 25ft-high RAF inflatable dartboard.

The novel attraction has wowed crowds at events for the last eight years and continued to do so at the Royal International Air Tattoo at Fairford and the Royal Welsh Show on Llanelwedd, Builth Wells.

Children and adults alike enjoyed kicking footballs at the Velcro® dartboard – also on show at Brize Norton's Summer Soccer Camp, Nottingham University Roadshow, Ducklington Sports Club and Linear Fisheries – with RAF Football Association personnel handing out flyers to show the wide number of opportunities within RAF Football.

An association spokesperson said: "This interactive activity allows for the RAF Football offer to be advertised to a wide audience. There was plenty of engagement and interest, which was great to see."

"With football being the largest participating sport across the RAF, there are plenty of opportunities for individuals, underlying the important role that football can play as a vehicle for good, including in both RAF recruitment and retention."

● Visit: royalairforcefa.com to find out more about Service football.

SAILING

Red Arrow puts on a fine display for Cowes Week



Daniel Abrahams

RAF SAILING'S J/109 Red Arrow completed a challenging Cowes Week, racing against some of the best crews in the UK and overseas in a 13-boat fleet.

Led by skipper WO Jim Will, the crew combined experienced offshore racers with several sailors competing in the famous event for the first time.

Will said: "Cowes Week once again delivered everything that makes offshore sailing such a unique challenge."

"Seeing HRH The Princess Royal wave to the crew before the start was a memorable moment, but once the gun went, our focus turned to racing. Sailing in 24 knots of breeze against a strong national and international J/109 fleet was a fantastic test, and I'm proud of how our mix of experienced sailors and Cowes Week newcomers worked together."

Personnel developed in confidence, working together through a wide range of conditions and close tactical racing as the week progressed, dealing with strong winds which reached a peak on what became known as Wild Wednesday.

Racing remained highly competitive throughout the week, with every start, wind shift and mark rounding proving decisive.

On Friday's race, one J/109 ran aground after being forced into shallow water during a close tacking duel, which Will said 'highlighted the fine margins of Solent racing'.

Despite the demanding conditions, the aviators completed the regatta safely, gaining valuable experience against a fleet featuring leading national and international teams.

The association's focus now turns to the Inter-Services Offshore Regatta later this month, where Red Arrow will once again represent the RAF as it goes head-to-head with Royal Navy and British Army crews in the annual offshore sailing competition.

● Find out more about RAF sailing at: rafsailing.co.uk

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

Sport

FITNESS

The Pye's the limit for Steph

RAF corporal powers to Navy win

Daniel Abrahams

A STORMING set of RAF results at the Royal Navy Functional Fitness Championships were the perfect preparation for the Service's own event later this month.

Held over two days in sweltering conditions at HMS Temeraire, the competition included tests of strength, endurance, running, swimming and a CrossFit style Workout of the Day (WOD).

The championship, which is in its third year, has seen performance levels increase accordingly, so it was even more impressive for the RAF women to take all the glory on the day, swooping all three podium spots and the overall team win.

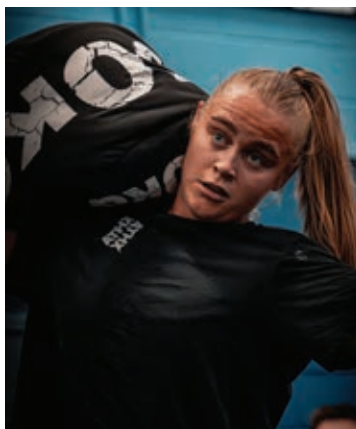
Cpl Steph Pye, first, Cpl Demi Tripp, second, and Cpl Hannah Nock, third, took no prisoners as they set a benchmark for the upcoming Service event.

In the men's section Cpl Tom Eeles came in second after an outstanding performance, with RAF Halton PTI Cpl Chris Moulam-Jones fifth.

Moulam-Jones said: "We are incredibly grateful to the Navy



SECOND: Cpl Demi Tripp



THIRD: Cpl Hannah Nock

for the invite to this competition, the programming and organisation were exceptional. The competitors and volunteers are so welcoming, this is one of the best competitions I go to every year."

The Service will be looking to get one up on the Royal Navy again as it hosts the inaugural RAF Functional Fitness Championships at Cosford on August 25.

An event spokesperson said: "Open to RAF Whole Force personnel, the competition will consist of three events, both outside on the athletics track and inside the gym, throughout the day."

"It will include a military PT style workout, strength test and a speed-endurance trial. No technical gymnastics is included in this competition to facilitate maximum participation, however, the day has been expertly programmed to ensure that beginner to experienced



CPL STEPH PYE: Fit aviator climbs to new heights at HMS Temeraire

athlete will be challenged."

● If you are interested in functional fitness, or attending the competition, search RAF

Functional Fitness on Teams, or message Sqn Ldr Abi Bagshaw or Cpl Chris Moulam-Jones on MODNET.

RUGBY UNION

Global Series call-ups for aviators

AN AVIATOR one-two sees Flt Lts Amy Cokayne and Sarah Bonar both selected for their respective countries in rugby union's WXV Global Series next month.

The tournament replaces the WXV competition which ran from 2023-2024, won both times by England.

Red Roses star Cokayne, on 94 international caps, said: "I'm incredibly proud to have been selected for the WXV squad this autumn. We've enjoyed some incredible success over the last year, winning the World Cup and the Six Nations, but everyone in the squad knows there is still plenty of hard work ahead if we're to keep improving and to maintain those high standards."

"The squad has a great mix of experienced players and exciting new talent, which creates an extremely competitive environment. We know we'll be tested by some of the best teams in the world, and we're all looking forward to the challenge."



OPPONENTS: Bonar (left) and Cokayne

To begin the campaign in Manchester, the home of my club, Sale Sharks, makes the occasion even more special.

"Playing in front of family, friends and supporters at the start of such an important tournament is something I'm really looking forward to."

Bonar is in Scotland's 32-player squad for the series – marking her return to the team

after a spell out injured forced her to miss the Guinness Women's Six Nations.

The aviator, who recently featured for Barbarians Women against Wales, said: "I'm excited to get back into camp with the Scotland girls. After a tough season with injury and missing out on Six Nations duty, I'm keen to get back into the mix and help the team prepare for a big block of international games."

England play their opening match against Australia at the CorpAcq Stadium in Salford on September 12, before facing Canada at Exeter's Sandy Park on September 19, ending their home leg of WXV fixtures at Allianz Stadium against New Zealand on September 26.

Scotland have an equally tough start to the tournament facing 2025 World Cup runners-up Canada on September 12, current world number two New Zealand on September 19 and Australia on September 26 at the Hive Stadium in Edinburgh.

FLAG FOOTBALL

Mustangs gear up for Inters with new Flag Tournament

SERVICE AMERICAN football is looking to expand its appeal, this time with the first ever Flag Tournament and training camp next month in Colchester.

The Army-hosted, three-day event will see all three Services present.

The Mustangs hope it will whet the appetite for new players to have their eyes turned towards the American sport and ever-growing association, in the lead-up to the inaugural Inter-Services matches played in the new autumn schedule.

The tournament, which is open to beginner and experienced players alike, will be held at Wattisham Flying Station, with game day at MCTC sports pitches, Colchester.

Sgt Ryan Abbotts, RAF

Mustangs Flag OIC, said: "We have found significant success in the contact side of American football, and we are hoping to replicate similar performances in the non-contact version."

Flag football is an altered version to the rules of NFL, with reduced pitch size and number of players down to five per side. It focuses on agility and speed while outright strength is less important than in the full-size version.

Sgt Abbotts added: "Anyone interested in becoming involved in flag football across any role, be it playing, coaching or on the committee side, should email: RAFA.Flag@gmail.com or follow RAF American football on social media."

SIDECAR

Bell tolls for Team RAF

Service outfit twice denied by high-flying Phils at Cadwell Park

Daniel Abrahams

A FANTASTIC second place and second in class was the high-speed return for the Service's sidocar team at Cadwell Park in Lincolnshire.

Cpl Rob Atkinson and stand-in civilian racer Shane Colbrook were involved in two battle royals in Round 4 of the British Sidocar Championship against Team Bell (Phil Bell and Phil Hyde), coming runners-up by just 10 seconds on the weekend's opening race before a wheel-to-wheel tussle in the second encounter from flag to finish line, narrowly missing out to their opponents.

Atkinson said: "It was a fantastic event and a brilliant first meeting hosted by No Limits Racing. It was amazing to see the supporters who lined the banks to cheer us on.

"A special thank you also goes to our RAF colleagues, friends and family who came along to support us throughout the weekend.

"We'll now turn our attention to round 5 at Anglesey, where we'll be looking to take another step forward."

The RAF team arrived at the track in good spirits, despite having spent all week



CONTENDERS: Team RAF
lc-photography.co.uk

troubleshooting handling issues that have hampered them throughout the season.

They went into their first race with the underlying issues remaining, so to qualify exceeded expectations – securing first

place in class and fifth overall with a 2025-matching 1:37.0 lap.

Having lost out off the line to Team Bell, and despite pushing hard throughout, the RAF could not close the gap.

Cooler conditions greeted the

grid, but the 14-lap contest was still a demanding test, with Team RAF and Team Bell going wheel-to-wheel from lights to flag in an exhilarating race.

Atkinson and Colbrook kept the pressure on all the way to

the chequered flag, in one of the closest races of the weekend, but just couldn't grab the victory.

Usual team member Cpl Mark Middleton remains sidelined by a hand injury picked up during a crash earlier in the season.

SKELETON

Scanned and deliver

RAF engineers help ice queen Nicole in quest for skeleton glory

Staff reporter

OLYMPIC SKELETON star Flt Lt Nicole Burger is hoping her team-up with 71 (IR) Sqn will help her scanned and deliver in upcoming competitions.

The RAF and South Africa slider worked with personnel from 71 Inspection and Repair Squadron who employed advanced HandySCAN 3D scanning technology to capture detailed images of the winter sports star on her sled.

The data recovered is now being used to analyse airflow and identify ways to improve aerodynamics to enhance performance and help her hurtle down ice tracks even faster.

The technology is routinely used by Wittering's 71 (IR)



THAT'S HANDY: 71 (IR) Sqn use 3D scanning technology on Flt Lt Nicole Burger

Sqn for precision measurement tasks that help maintain aircraft airworthiness.

Chf Tech Walkman said: "In this project, the same expertise was applied to support elite sport, with detailed digital models enabling specialists to analyse

airflow around both Flt Lt Nicole Burger and her skeleton sled.

"The insights gained could help identify aerodynamic improvements to enhance performance and reduce race times, demonstrating the versatility of RAF engineering

capabilities beyond the air environment.

"The aim is to transfer these 3D scan models into a Computational Fluid Dynamic program to see how the aerodynamics can be optimised with the overall goal of improving her run times."

Burger said: "This shows the incredible versatility of the RAF and what our engineers can do both operationally and to help athletes utilising the technology they have, to make a difference on the international sporting as well as on the military stage.

"The Sqn were so welcoming and so helpful, it was brilliant. I'll be returning with my new sleds to see how they can help me going forward."

● Follow Flt Lt Burger on Instagram @nicoleburger.skeleton.

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

ICE HOCKEY

McCracken Hungary for National League



BRAGGING RIGHTS: RAAF's FS Shaun Ton stewarding at Lord's for women's T20 World Cup final between England and Australia

Ton up at Lord's

CRICKET

WHEN IT comes to international cricket stewarding the RAF has been hitting sixes for 20 years and this summer saw an extra bit of Inter-Service rivalry.

A team of 18 personnel – including FS Shaun Ton, an Airborne Electronics Analyst on exchange from the Royal Australian Air Force – helped steward the Women's T20 World Cup final at Lord's last month between England and Australia; with bragging rights going to Ton as Australia lifted the trophy.

FS Nathen Massingham, single Service lead for the Air Force (pictured inset above), said: "It added a bit of spice to a great day's involvement and cricket. FS Ton was gracious in victory as well."

The stewarding scheme started at the Home of Cricket

20 years ago, with the RAF being front and centre since then, with similar schemes being held at Edgbaston and The Oval since. So far this year seven matches have been supported by the Air Force, with a further five fixtures proposed before the season ends in September.

Massingham said: "I am responsible for recruiting, selecting and delivering military stewards on behalf of the RAF to the Tri-Service Coordinator at three major cricket venues."

"Highlights so far this summer must be the women's final, we have also supported England Test matches at Lord's and The Oval against New Zealand, including the match at The Oval which was Ben Stokes' last game."

"In addition, military stewards supported the T20 Blast Finals Day at Edgbaston, and we are looking ahead to the

Ashes in 2027." He added: "The scheme is a fantastic opportunity for military personnel to be part of one of the biggest sporting events in the UK, while continuing to represent the Armed Forces and engage with the public at some of the country's most iconic cricket grounds."

"Once selected, the stewards – who are all volunteers – conduct honorary stewarding duties. They greet spectators with a smile, assist them in finding their seats and help ensure that everyone has a fun and safe day at the cricket."

"One of the key aspects of the role is engagement with the public. It is amazing how many civilian spectators are genuinely interested in Service personnel, their military roles and what they do both in their day-to-day careers and while supporting the cricket."

● For more details on volunteering search FS Massingham on Modnet.



SUMMER EXPOSURE: Cpl Lewis McCracken at elite event in Budapest

THE RISE of ice hockey official Cpl Lewis McCracken took another step up as the Ground Engineer was selected to attend the prestigious Summer Exposure event in Budapest.

The event, supported by NHL, saw the aviator competing against 60 fellow officials from 20 different countries in preparation for the coming season as a semi-professional ice hockey referee, starting later this month.

McCracken, who has officiated in NHL One for the last two seasons, is now on the cusp of moving into the elite level National league, with the Hungary week another feather in his ever-growing cap.

He said: "It's a huge step, any upwards direction is good, and what I am aiming for."

"I was aware of it when a group of friends took part in it, so I pushed myself to get selected. On and off-ice activates fitted in with exactly what I want to do and I was fortunate enough to get there."

Before jetting off to the showcase event, McCracken attended the EIH Showcase (England Ice Hockey) in May at Sheffield Ice.

During the chaotically busy four-day event, the airman underwent coaching assessments and was told he is likely to make the step up to National level.

He said: "Sheffield is a great set-up; the days

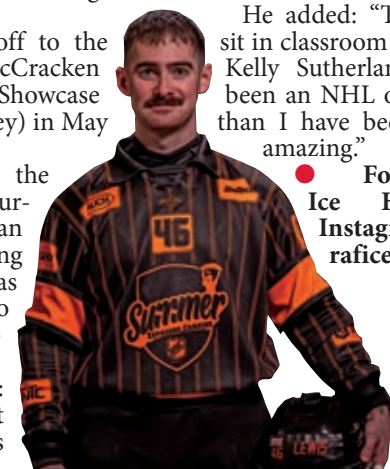
were long – 6am to 10pm – but they are a great experience and the perfect set-up for Hungary."

Having kitted up for the week in Budapest, McCracken found his military fitness and training stood him in good stead for the testing trials. He also found time to learn and geek out at the same time, with Q&A sessions with one of the game's icons of officiating – Kelly Sutherland.

He said: "We kitted, and warm-up sessions tested our fitness – Hungary via Amsterdam, so long journey and tired legs. My military fitness put me in good standing."

"My Service background is helping me immensely with my pursuit of excellence in the sport and my role – it helps with fitness, managing situations and prioritising things to maintain a steady flow and to keep the game going. My work at Brize as a Ground Engineer also involves that and to see it seamlessly translate to the ice is great."

He added: "To be able to sit in classroom sessions with Kelly Sutherland, who has been an NHL official longer than I have been alive, was amazing."



● Follow RAF Ice Hockey on Instagram @raficehockey

AMBITIOUS: Corporal is on the cusp of National League duties

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



Easy as Pye for superfit women



See p24

CYCLING

Summerbell proves the best of bunch at Inter-Services

RAF riders have Crit between their teeth

Daniel Abrahams

DOUBLE RUNNER-UP spots were the hard-earned prize for the Service's road cyclists at this year's Army-hosted Inter-Service Circuit Championships.

Aviator Sgt Rich Summerbell shone brightest for the RAF at Redbridge Cycling Centre for the Criterium on a technical, 2km course with a 9 per cent climb on each lap.

The race started fast and hard with each Service looking to eke out an advantage, but it was Summerbell who broke away first with an Army rider and the pair were never seen again for the rest of the event.

Behind the two leaders attacks continued to take place, with various breaks having moments but each ultimately drawn back into the chasing pack.

Each surge in pace whittled down the main bunch and with superior strength in depth, the Army team had the numbers to mark and disrupt the RAF's favourite rider.

In the last few laps Summerbell continued to work for the win but was eventually pipped on the last climb by the strong Army rider, who took first place.

The reduced pack was finally broken when another Army rider went solo to take the last place on the podium.

Remaining places were hotly



CRIT-ICAL MASS: Strength in depth proved decisive for the Army riders

contested, with every rider's position counting towards the outcome of the team race.

As it was, the aviators ultimately came up short against the Army, who took both the

individual and team crit prize.

● Follow RAF road cycling on Instagram @rafcycling.

FENCING

Elsa's on point at Henlow

A MEN'S team runner-up slot, Inter-Unit win and a healthy scattering of individual medals was the return from this year's IS fencing championships at RAF Henlow.

The week-long championships saw High Wycombe win the Inter-Unit event, and men's team victorious in the epee discipline. There was also a haul of four triangular event gold medals, three individual silver and bronzes and three Inter-Unit golds.

Winner of two individual bronze medals, Flt Lt Warwick Mitchell-Gough, RAF Fencing Union Deputy Chair, said: "Another hard-



BEST UNIT: RAF High Wycombe
PHOTOS: SPONGE BEATTIE

fought Inter-Services for the RAF. The team did incredibly well to secure a strong second place finish and there were some fantastic individual results too and High Wycombe being

victorious in the three-Person Inter-Unit Team competition."

Men's captain Cpl Liam Deneley, who won a gold in Men's Triangular and an individual silver, said: "Once again, another great Inter-Services and always a pleasure to attend, especially this year with it being first as RAFFU Men's Captain.

"It's a privilege to lead such a talented group of fencers into this competition. Well done to everyone who fenced and achieved second just behind the Royal Navy, it's a solid place to build on to win next year."

Sqn Ldr Elsa Phillipson, Interim Women's Captain, who collected a gold in the Inter-Unit Event, plus two individual silvers and a bronze, said: "Being

selected to represent the RAF is always a point of pride, and the competition week is always a lot of fun. The Inter-Services was a great mix of high-level competitive fencing, friendships and rivalry, and of course fun socials. Although this year wasn't our most successful, that just gives the whole team more drive for next year.

"We had a really encouraging spread of experience from those who have fenced since childhood through to those who only learnt to fence from RAF grassroots events in the last year, so we're always looking to recruit some new faces to help us claim back some silverware."

● Follow RAF fencing on Instagram @raffencing.



MOST MEDALS:

Interim women's captain, Sqn Ldr Elsa Phillipson



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HELP for
HEROES

R'n'R



Win top F-4
Phantom title ● p8



**Out of the blue –
win Ocean Film
Festival tickets**

● See
page 5

Film reviews: pages 3 & 8 + Announcements: page 6 + Puzzles: page 8

BREW+
BAKE!



IT'S TIME TO BREW AND BAKE FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH.

We all know it's good to talk. Host a Brew and Bake coffee morning or bake sale on station, at home, or in your community and make a life-changing difference to a veteran whilst having a brew, some banter and a slice of cake.



Simply sign up online for your **free** fundraising pack.
Raise funds by asking for donations in return for a
delicious brew and some baked goodies.

**COMBAT
STRESS**
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH



Theatre
Private Peaceful
UK tour

Dream debut for rookie actor Ben

A MAJOR UK tour of the play adapted from Michael Morpurgo's World War I-set novel *Private Peaceful* returns to the stage this autumn.

Extra dates have now been added, extending the tour into February 2027.

Newcomer Benjamin Cain will make his professional debut in this acclaimed one-person tour de force as Tommo Peaceful.

The production sees a single actor conjure an entire world of characters, landscapes and emotions in the show, directed by Simon Reade.

Rising star Cain, a recent graduate from the BA Professional Acting course at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, said: "I am incredibly excited and grateful to be doing this play and to be working with so many brilliant themes. Simon has created such a relaxed atmosphere since the first

He takes lead as Tommo in one-man WWI show fresh out of stage school

audition and is so passionate, it will be a privilege to work with him."

Reade said: "Earlier this summer I saw a young actor in his graduating show at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School: Benjamin Cain. He was witty, truthful, strong, yet vulnerable. I knew at once here was our new Peaceful. Ben was raised in a Dorset village. For him, this really is a story close to home. What an opportunity, for me, as much as Ben, to revive Michael's contemporary classic of love and loss – this theatrical celebration of life."

Described as at once heartwarming and heartbreaking

and a moving family drama and a powerful reminder of the human cost of war, the play depicts Tommo, on the eve of battle, looking back over the events that shaped his life: the warmth of family, the innocence of first love, and the deep bond with his brother that carries him through the horrors of war.

Reade has been collaborating with *War Horse* author Morpurgo since 2004, when they first created the one-person show *Private Peaceful* at Bristol Old Vic, which has since played the West End, Off-Broadway and toured the world. Simon also



CAIN AND ABLE: Acting graduate Benjamin has impressed director Simon Reade

dramatised *Private Peaceful* for BBC Radio 4 and for the feature film starring George Mackay and Jack O'Connell.

Morpurgo has been writing stories since the 1970s and is one of the UK's best-loved authors. Appointed Children's Laureate in 2003, he has written more than 150 books and was awarded the OBE for his writing in 2006. In

1976, Michael and his wife Clare started the charity Farms for City Children, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

The tour starts at Exeter's Northcott Theatre on September 9 and finishes at Blackpool's Grand Theatre on February 3, 2027.

● Go to: playsontour.co.uk for more details.



Music
Man/Woman/Chainsaw
New album and UK/Ireland tour

First album from vaunted Man/Woman/Chainsaw

DESCRIBED AS the most exciting band in London right now, Man/Woman/Chainsaw have just released their debut album, *Cannonball*, and details of a UK and Ireland headline tour in September-October.

The album will be available on eco-mix black vinyl, a limited edition berry coloured LP with signed insert and a Rough Trade exclusive blue & clear splatter edition LP paired with a bonus 7" available nowhere else.

The London-based six-piece are a close-knit group formed by friends Billy Ward & Vera Leppänen at only 16 years old. The bold new single, *Nosedive*, and album follows European dates over the last month and a breakthrough 2025 where the band sold out both London's Scala and an entire UK tour in October, their second sold-out tour of the year.

Emmie-Mae, lead vocalist on *Nosedive*

and one of three members to share lead vocal roles on the album, said of the single: "It's a song about longing for both comfort and freedom simultaneously in a relationship through the metaphor of being an injured bird needing shelter. We turned it into a danceable upbeat track, which made the tone shift throughout the song as though you find a way to pick yourself up and fly away."

The 11 songs of *Cannonball* have been hailed as grand and exuberant, rich with unconventional structures and world-beating choruses.

"We were talking about having a whole record of bangers – having everything be really in your face," said drummer Lola Cherry.

The tour kicks off in Belfast on September 19 and finishes at London's Electric Ballroom on October 7.

● Go to: manwomanchainsaw.com for all tour dates.



ART-ROCK-PUNK: Man/Woman/Chainsaw



Film Review
Super Troopers 3 (15)
In cinemas now

Super-silly Troopers

THE HIGHWAY police gang are back investigating a Canadian drug ring – but something a lot more important is stealing their attention: a wedding.

When meathead of the group Farva (Kevin Heffernan) rescues Sarita (Hannah Simone) from a hit-and-run, they are swept up into a whirlwind romance, not hurt by the fact that she is the sister of Thorny (the film's writer-director Jay Chandrasekhar). Not so keen on the arrangement, Thorny is determined to sabotage the marriage, his method: use his powers as best man to orchestrate situations in which his own Indian parents witness Farva's naturally obnoxious personality and call things off.

Meanwhile Mac (Steve Lemme), Foster (Paul Soter), Rabbit (Erik Stolhanske) and new rookie on the force Coy Burns (Andrew Dismukes) focus on this drug that is being smuggled down from Canada. That is, when they're not distracted by street racing in their new electric squad car.

It's a simple, and maybe underwritten story, that puts these plot lines on course to meet each other. However, the charm of Broken Lizard (the comedy group behind this franchise) comes in their relentless



TROOPERS: They're hardly electric, but their new squad car is

silliness, gross-out humour and sheer volume of jokes. They may not be great jokes, but there sure are a lot of them. There are a couple of franchise classics – pranking pulled over pedestrians – but the vast majority goes to the culture-clash of the wedding.

There are some obvious choices amongst the mayhem – accidental drug-taking, and whatever the opposite of snake-charming is – but then there are also some bigger swings involving crustaceans and maple syrup.

It's dated, stupid and occasionally funny – exactly what you'd expect from another *Super Troopers*.

Two roundels out of five ●●
Review by Sam Cooney

R'n'R



Music
Gabriella Cilmi
Pure Love

PURE LOVE:
New album



Pure Love order of the day for Gabby



NEW MUSIC: Gabriella Cilmi to release long-awaited album

THE SWEET *About Me* hitmaker Gabriella Cilmi has announced that her new album *Pure Love* – her first in 13 years – will be released on October 9, following the single *YRU Hanging Around*.

She said: “*Pure Love* is the record I’ve always wanted to make. The songs and lyrics are more unfiltered and the recordings have a rawness to them, so I feel like it’s the most pure record I’ve made. It was recorded live to tape during a harvest moon and I like to think of the songs like ripe fruit finally ready to be consumed after lots of watering, tending and patience.”

She added: “*YRU Hanging Around* is about the realisation that you’ve been waiting on the approval of others for way too long. It’s about that aha moment when all of a sudden you have an epiphany that you don’t need anyone’s permission to live the life you want except your own.”

After appearing as a special guest on Beverley Knight’s nationwide tour, Gabriella’s return to the music scene has also seen her play shows in Australia with The Corrs as well as a BRITS/War Child show in London alongside Jack Savoretti and Katherine Jenkins.

Gabriella will be performing live at Camper Calling (August 29) and starts a full UK headline tour on November 19 in Leeds, with dates to follow in Edinburgh, Newcastle, Manchester, London and Birmingham.

The singer-songwriter was signed to Australia’s Mushroom Records when she was just 13 and a few years later the breakthrough success of *Sweet About Me* and her Gold-certified UK Top 10 debut album *Lessons To Be Learned* took the teenager global.

● Go to: gabriellacilmi.tmstor.es for tour dates.



Theatre
dinnerladies
UK tour

Another helping of *dinnerladies*

A NEW stage adaptation of Victoria Wood’s beloved sitcom starring stage and TV favourite Les Dennis starts a UK tour next January.

The show features a storyline inspired by the original TV sitcom episodes and characters created by comedy legend Wood. *dinnerladies* ran for two acclaimed series and 16 episodes between 1998 and 2000 and starred Wood as deputy canteen manager Bren.

A spokesperson said: “Audiences will be reunited with the unforgettable world of *dinnerladies*, and the affectionate portrayal of everyday working British life. This new adaptation will feature all the much-loved characters that made the show a huge British classic with a lasting place in comedy history, including Bren, Tony, Dolly, Anita, Jean, Twinkle, Philippa and Stan. Whether you’re revisiting an old



DENNIS: Will play the part of Stan

favourite or discovering it for the first time, *dinnerladies* serves up a hilarious night out packed with heart, nostalgia and plenty of surprises.”

Les Dennis said: “I’m thrilled to be on board with this new production. I’m lucky enough to say I knew Victoria – she and I performed on the comedy

circuit in the 1970s and were both finalists on *New Faces*. I was always such a fan of her – both as a person, and as a comedic voice.

“Being part of this tour and seeing these beloved northern working class characters brought to the stage is a perfect way to keep her legacy alive. I’m the first cast member to be announced as Stan, and I can’t wait to see which fantastic actresses will be bringing these amazing *dinnerladies* characters to life – they’re all such fantastic roles. I think fans of Victoria will be in for a real treat after hearing director Sean Foley’s plans for this tour.”

Further casting is due to be announced.

The tour starts at Bromley’s Churchill Theatre on January 22 and continues to venues nationwide until August 7.

● Go to: dinnerladiestheplay.co.uk for more information.



TV
Between the Covers Live!
UK tour



CRIME WRITER:
Lucy Foley will be at every show, along with author and actor Ben Miller, right

All hail Chr Queen of C Stars share their love

AN ALL-STAR line-up of special guests will join the UK tour this October of *Between The Covers Live! – Celebrating Agatha Christie*. Hosted by Amanda Ross, creator and executive producer of the BBC’s *Between the Covers* programme, every live show will also feature actor, comedian and bestselling author Ben Miller alongside bestselling crime writer Lucy Foley. Joining them at different shows across the UK will be a rotating line-up of special guests.

Actress, author and *Gavin & Stacey* co-creator Ruth Jones will make a special appearance at Guildford G Live on October 11, whilst broadcaster and bestselling crime writer Rob Rinder, actor Nigel Havers and Agatha Christie’s great-grandson and chairman and CEO of Agatha Christie Limited, James Prichard, will each appear at selected performances elsewhere throughout the tour.

Marking 50 years since her death, the tour invites audiences into the ultimate fantasy book club where all the book picks are written or inspired by the world’s bestselling novelist of all time: the legendary “Queen of Crime”, Agatha Christie.

A spokesperson said: “The show will celebrate this incredible woman whose fictional creations were as forward thinking, brave and dangerous as her own real life.

“She was way ahead of her time, without the benefit of a decent education, but from her first book, she became a celebrity. So much so, that when her first marriage failed and she discovered her husband’s infidelity, she disappeared to Harrogate, which launched a search involving thousands of volunteers.

“She assumed a new identity and defied two different police forces’ investigations as she was feared dead in terrible circumstances, the stuff of a crime novel. She subsequently travelled the world on archaeological digs and married a



Compiled by Executive Features Editor Tracey Allen



istie: rime

of the genius of writer Agatha



RUTH JONES: Co-created *Gavin & Stacey*

man 15 years her junior.

"It's hard to comprehend the creative powers of someone capable of writing 90 different works of fiction, selling over two billion copies worldwide, but this show celebrates her enduring ability to entertain and her legacy."

Audiences are invited to join this exclusive book club to discuss some of Agatha's own favourite titles, as well as the line-up's own beloved titles. They will get an insight into the worlds of Marple, Poirot and Tuppence, and hear about how the panel were inspired to write their own books influenced by the Queen of Crime.

Havers (left), who joins the tour at Oxford Playhouse (October 6), High Wycombe Swan (Oct 7) and in Chesterfield, Winchester, Torquay and Salford, said: "I am over the moon to be celebrating the original Queen of Crime at six dates on this tour. I devoured her books and, of course, the various TV and film adaptations growing up. I've always been completely captivated



ROSS ON WHY: Host Amanda Ross will let stars tell audiences why they admire Christie



AUTHOR: Lawyer and TV star Rob Rinder

by how she could construct these flawless, sweeping mysteries with such brilliant characters, the sort of people you'd happily invite over for a gin and tonic, only to discover they're hiding delicious, dark, and dramatic secrets behind their perfect manners.

"I cannot wait to share my favourites, plunge into the nostalgia of my Christie firsts and celebrate her magnificent legacy. I can't wait to see you all there. Do come along, it promises to be a lot of fun!"

Joining Ben Miller, Lucy Foley and Amanda Ross at Fareham Live (Oct 5) and Edinburgh Queen's Hall (Oct 13), Rob Rinder said: "Agatha Christie has been one of the great pleasures of my reading life for as

long as I can remember. Long before I found myself creating crime fiction, she taught me that the best mysteries aren't really about the body in the library, they're about the people standing around pretending not to notice it.

"I'm delighted to be joining such a terrific line-up to celebrate the woman who invented so many of the rules the rest of us are still trying to follow. We'll be talking about the books we love, the twists we never saw coming, the characters we still can't forget and why Christie remains endlessly readable. Whether you're devoted to Poirot, loyal to Miss Marple or simply love a good mystery, I hope you'll join us. I'm really looking forward to meeting readers at the book signings too."

Ruth Jones added: "Agatha Christie's stories have stood the test of time for a reason – they're brilliantly crafted, endlessly entertaining and still keep us guessing. Having had the opportunity to appear in [Agatha Christie's Marple episode] *The Secret of Chimneys* was a real joy, and I'm looking forward to joining fellow Christie enthusiasts to celebrate the Queen of Crime and share in the passion that so many of us have for her work."

Audience members will also have the chance to meet the panellists at exclusive interval and post-show signing sessions.

● Go to: [betweenthecoverslive.com](https://www.betweenthecoverslive.com) for full tour details.



Cinema

Ocean Film Festival

UK tour



EPIC CHALLENGE: Crossing the Pacific in homemade rafts in the Seventies

Dive into these must-sea films

DIVE INTO a night of thrilling adventure – the Ocean Film Festival World Tour is bringing a new collection of captivating sea-themed films to venues around the UK this autumn.

The tour features a powerful and visually stunning line-up of short films that celebrate the ocean from every angle: above the surface, beneath the waves, and deep into the stories that connect us all to the sea.

Created in Australia, The Ocean Film Festival World Tour was established in 2014.

"As we head into our 13th year, the Ocean Film Festival World Tour remains a celebration of the ocean in all its beauty, power and vulnerability," said UK tour director Nell Teasdale.

"Each film in the 2026 programme will offer something special, whether it's extraordinary adventure, breathtaking marine life or people dedicating their lives to protecting the sea."

One of the standout films in the 2026 collection is *The Raftsmen*, an epic story of courage and endurance. Twelve unlikely adventurers from seven different countries come together to attempt a feat few would dare imagine – crossing the Pacific Ocean on three handmade wooden rafts, guided only by the sun and stars.

Battling storms, starvation and the psychological toll of life at sea, their six-month journey remains the longest raft expedition ever completed.

Now, 50 years later, the original 16mm footage has been beautifully restored into 4K, allowing modern audiences to witness the sheer scale of this



ARCTIC TALE: *Stone Biter*
Photo: Ismaele Tortella

once-in-a-lifetime ocean odyssey.

Other films announced so far include *Stone Biter: Saving The Arctic Sea Forests*, which is a story of restoration and hope in a fragile Arctic ecosystem.

"It's always incredible to see audiences come out year after year – not just to watch beautiful films, but to feel part of something bigger," said Nell.

"The ocean connects all of us, and this event is a chance to celebrate that connection on the big screen."

WIN TICKETS

ONE LUCKY RAF News reader can win a pair of tickets to the festival date of their choice. To be in with a chance of winning, answer this question correctly:

Win!

In which year was the Ocean Film Festival World Tour established?

Email your answer, marked Ocean Film Festival Tour 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 September 18. Please state on your entry your venue of choice.

For dates and tickets, visit: oceanfilmfestival.co.uk.



Your Announcements

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

Wedding anniversary

WEDDING Anniversary, 50 years. Everyone said it wouldn't last 12 months, but now 50 years later we are still together. Steven Bird married Elizabeth Bird (née Speirs). Married July 28, 1976. Still together.

Seeking

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

I would be very keen to hear from any former members of Number 44G State Enrolled Nurse Course who undertook their programme of Nurse Education at RAF Hospital Ely (as it was at that time) between 1971 and 1973. Please email: retiredraf8030192@gmail.com. Paul Elliott P8030192, served between 1971 and 1985.

DO you know anyone who trained at one of the six British Flying Training Schools in America in World War II? The Falcon Field Association: The Next Generation is holding its next annual event in Edinburgh on October 3-4. This year we are widening our invitation to include anyone connected with any of the BFTSs. If you learned to fly at a BFTS or are related to a pilot who trained there, we'd love to hear from you. Please email Kathryn Masters: falconfieldassociationtng@gmail.

Reunions

THE RAF Masirah and RAF Salalah Veterans Association AGM and Reunion Gala Dinner is to be held on Saturday, October 10. This will be at The

Eastwood Hall Hotel, Mansfield Road, Nottingham NG16 3SS. All members are very welcome to attend. If you are interested in attending the event, please contact Alan Teasdale, on joalteas@btinternet.com. If you would like to join The Association, please visit our website www.omanrafveterans.org for further details and information.

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

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

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

Associations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



KEEP ON RUNNING: 121 EAW personnel hit the road in Romania for charity

Going the extra mile

MEMBERS OF 121 Expeditionary Air Wing deployed on Operation Biloxi have raised more than £2,100 for military charities through a series of demanding fitness challenges organised during their deployment in Romania.

In aid of the Mark Long Trust, personnel completed the ambitious 50,000 Burpees in 50 Days Challenge, raising £435 for the charity. The fundraising effort was followed by an even tougher

endurance event in aid of Combat Stress. Runners completed 1.1 miles every hour, on the hour, for 24 consecutive hours, covering a marathon distance over a full day and night. The physically and mentally demanding challenge raised £1,704 for the charity.

Deployed PTI Sgt Mahon said: "The charity events have given our personnel a fantastic opportunity to stay fit, challenge themselves and support two outstanding causes."



Mosquito model up for sale

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

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

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

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

Experts offer free workshop

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

Stronger Relationships, Stronger Service Lives will cover emotional

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

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

● Goto: christinepatersondeacon.com for more information



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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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D-Day veteran Ron is Waddington special guest

A WORLD War II veteran who stormed the beaches of Normandy at just 18 years old has celebrated his 101st birthday, writes Wg Cdr Suzanne Hobbs.

Cpl Ronald 'Ron' Brammer, born in Sheffield in August 1925, played a vital role in one of history's most pivotal moments: the D-Day landings of June 6, 1944.

Ron and his son Neil, an MOD engineer working on the Airseeker programme at RAF Waddington, were recently invited to visit the station's Heritage Museum and Ron shared his experiences during a special D-Day commemorative dinner.

Ron enlisted in the Durham Light Infantry shortly after his 18th birthday in November 1943. He was trained to operate the PIAT — a powerful but heavy infantry anti-tank weapon.

On D-Day, Ron landed on Gold Beach under intense threat from enemy forces.

"We had to wade through waist-deep water," he recalled,



describing the perilous journey from landing craft to shore while heavily laden with equipment.

Enemy snipers watched from fortified bunkers, but Ron credits the RAF's Spitfire with providing crucial air support that helped save countless lives that day.

Against the odds, Ron survived the landing — and the campaign that followed.

After the success of D-Day, Ron's unit pushed deep into continental Europe, advancing through France, Holland and into Germany. Carrying the PIAT, he remained near the rear of the brigade, summoned forward whenever German tanks were

spotted. His job: disable them by targeting their tracks.

Danger was constant. During one patrol, an officer walking beside him triggered a landmine — a moment that abruptly ended the mission and underscored the ever-present risks.

When victory in Europe was declared, Ron remained in Germany as part of the Allied peacekeeping force. Stationed in Göttingen, he became a Cpl and trained Yugoslavian troops in their new duties.

He met Trudy, a German former radar operator and performer in a wartime singing group.

Ron returned to the UK and successfully arranged for Trudy to join him. They married in March 1948, just months after her arrival, and went on to build a life together in Sheffield and later Melton Mowbray. Their marriage lasted until Trudy's death in 2016.

Ron's medals include the 1939–1945 Star, the France and Germany Star, the War Medal (1939–1945) and the Légion d'honneur.



MAKING HISTORY: Ron Brammer and his son Neil at Waddington's Heritage Museum. *Left*, young Ron during WWII



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Prize Crossword
No. 416

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the 12 letters in yellow squares to find an RAF term.

Across

- 6. Unhappy Gatsby's bird (4,3)
- 7. May Alistair use waterway? (5)
- 9. Tyrant initially beats up lazy, little yobbo (5)
- 10. Support particular RAF quality (7)
- 12. Swimmers unlock English safe (11)
- 14. RAF aircraft cheer pilots up (11)
- 18. First saboteur murdered the talented (7)
- 19. Dam a bird (5)
- 21. Legally relative (2-3)
- 22. Cinematic high-fliers (3,4)

Down

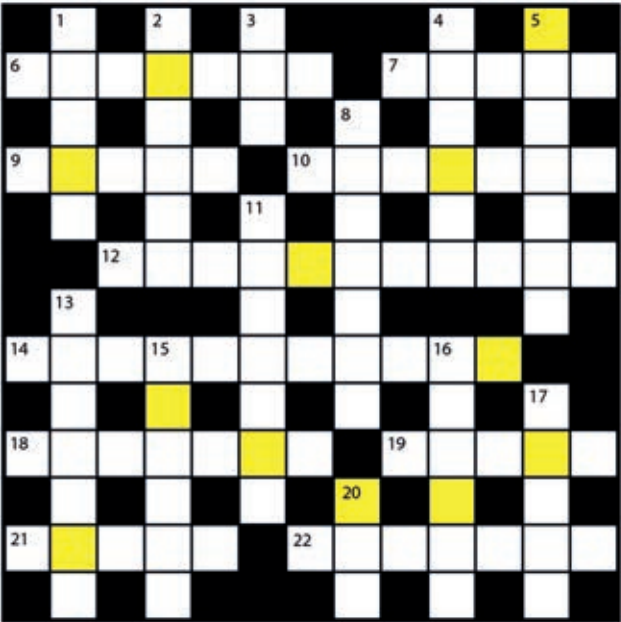
- 1. 100 attend noisy mass (5)
- 2. Some summer liners contain RAF aircraft (6)
- 3. And 4 Down. Defence Secretary and maybe six enter containers (3,6)
- 4. See 3 Down
- 5. Porter on defence vessel (7)
- 8. Sounds like seers seeking dividends (7)
- 11. Patel will duck Peg's follower (7)
- 13. Poseidon's an example of 14 Across (3,4)
- 15. A silly mistake! Couldn't agree more! (3,3)
- 16. Give up...or take the job again (6)
- 17. A little black out (5)
- 20. King expresses pain during argument (3)

Name:

Address:

RAF term:Crossword No. 416

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent top book title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by September 18, 2026.



Prize Crossword No. 415 solution

Across – 1. Vale 8. Measurable 9. Upmarket 10. Lobe 12. Reaper 14. Rocket 15. Fierce 17. Strike 18. Oman 19. Abingdon 21. Cruise Ship 22. Eats
Down – 2. At A Premium 3. Emma 4. Hawker 5. Hunter 6. Cable Car 7. Here 11. Break Point 13. Paranoia 16. Elated 17. Slight 18. Once 20. Gape
RAF rank – Air Vice-Marshal

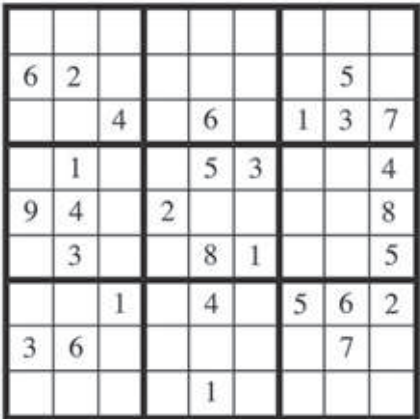
Prize Crossword No. 414 winner is: Barry Barnes, Lincoln.



Prize Su Doku
No. 426

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 September 18, 2026. The winner of Su Doku No: 424 is: Mrs M Cliff, Fakenham.



Solution to Su Doku No. 425

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

Film Review

Holy Days (12A)
In cinemas now

SACRED MISSION: The nuns with young Brian



Nuns on the run

THREE NUNS and a young boy hit the road in search of the deeds that will save their church from the big bad property developer, in this mild-mannered road movie. Set in New Zealand in the 70s, Sisters Agnes (Judy Davis), Luke (Miriam Margolyes) and Mary Clare (Jacki Weaver) decide to take matters into their own hands when they discover their convent is under threat. Young Brian (Elijah Tamati) decides to tag along too, having grown accustomed to the sisters' company since his mother died. A nun herself, Brian is often sent

to the church as punishment for his many acts of rebellion, but you get the impression that he just misses his mum. Not accepting the fact that his father (Craig Hall) has moved on and has a partner, Brian is in the care of the nuns when they make a break for it – borrowing a car from Bishop Chaytor (John Bach) without him knowing. Once on the road the tame high jinks continue, with comedy coming in the form of the nuns going wild: dancing, smoking the odd cigarette, and occasional flatulence (no prizes for guessing this befalls Margolyes). There's a

gentle charm to watching the trio let loose, but the gags rarely land with enough force to make the journey particularly memorable. The cast are all as good as you would expect, including an impressive child performance from Tamati, intent on providing some light comedy, but they aren't given an awful lot to do, resulting in an adventure that stays a little dull. Holy Days has a lot of talent on display, and the film may be a safe and wholesome family-friendly option, free of innuendo or anything too exciting. Review by Sam Cooney Two roundels out of five



Competition

F-4 Phantom In The Air
pen-and-sword.co.uk



Fabled Phantom

FORMER RAF Air Traffic Controller Robbie Shaw has been an aircraft enthusiast since he was 12. A keen aviation photographer, he has had many flights in military jets, including seven with F-4 Phantom units – six with the RAF and one with the USAF. Now Robbie has produced a book McDonnell-Douglas F-4 Phantom In The Air (pen-and-sword.co.uk) featuring his unique collection of photographs acquired while he was an ATC with the Service. Other photographs featured were taken by the author's friends including a member of the Luftwaffe, an American civilian photographer and an RAF navigator who provided Robbie with Phantom shots taken in the Falkland Islands. Robbie described the aircraft as "one of the most charismatic ever to have flown, and without



doubt a firm favourite of aircraft enthusiasts around the world". The jets featured in the book are from the RAF, the USAF and the German, Spanish and Turkish air forces. Some of them feature special markings. The F-4 was widely used by the US in combat in the Vietnam War and the Gulf War, and by the Israeli Air Force. It has also been used by Australia, the Republic of Korea and Japan. We have copies of this great title up for grabs. For your chance to win one, answer this question correctly: What was Robbie Shaw's role in the RAF? Email your answer, marked F-4 Phantom 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 September 18. Please include your full postal address with your entry.