

The Forces' favourite paper

RAF Chipmunk and its lasting legacy

See page 19

Win!



German take on WWII's air fight

See R'n'R page 5

Win!



ROYAL AIR FORCE

Friday, July 24, 2026
Edition No.1637

Only 99p

RAF News

Families and air chiefs pay tribute to The Few

See pages 14-15 for photographs and report from the Battle of Britain Memorial at Capel-le-Ferne



Motorsport
Sgt an Old Skool hero



● See page 23

Rugby Union
Aspinall in Quins move

● See p24



Shooting
Cpl is top gun again

● See p27



High stakes in Hawaii



Amy Casey
Hawaii

AIR FORCE medical teams launched humanitarian life-saving drills off the coast of Hawaii as Nato forces gathered in the Pacific for the world's

largest maritime exercise.

Now in its 30th year, the month-long Rimpac exercise brings together 31 nations, 25,000 personnel, 40 surface ships, five submarines and more than 140 aircraft.

● Continues p3

BiteSize



“It’s the best two weeks of the year - the camaraderie is incredible,”



Wimbledon steward and fundraiser extraordinaire
Cpl Hayley Court
See page 7



“I’d like to give politics a go before my fifties,”

Celebrity Traitor Lucy Beaumont thinks there’s room for another comedian in the House of Commons

See R’n’R pages 4-5



“Hopefully, I can inspire others to chase their own goals too,”

RAF ironman FS Scott Hill after his latest triathlon triumph

See page 27

Ukraine gets Gripen



ROYAL AIR FORCE
RAF News

RAF News

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IN ONE of his last acts as Prime Minister, Keir Starmer has announced the UK is investing €300 million to deliver Swedish Gripen fighters to Ukraine.

The aircraft will help defend against Russian attacks and boost Britain’s defence industry by supporting 5,000 skilled jobs.

The funding will help Ukraine field a squadron of 16 Gripen E fighter jets by 2029 and includes pilot and engineer training, simulators and spare parts.

Defence Secretary Dan Jarvis said: “These fighter jets will help give Ukraine the air power needed to deter Putin.”

This investment builds on the Prime Minister’s pledge to deliver 150,000 drones and thousands of air defence missiles to Ukraine this year.

Gripen jets have low maintenance requirements and can be operated by small ground crews, making them well-suited to Ukraine’s operational requirements.



AIRPOWER: £300m deal will deliver low-maintenance Gripen fighters to boost Ukraine’s air defences

This Week In History



1980

Red Flag goes up

THE RAF makes its debut at the US-run Exercise Red Flag with 10 Buccaneers and two Vulcans operating from Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada.

1947

Ejection debut

THE UK’S first live ejector seat trial is carried out as Martin-Baker test pilot Bernard Lynch exits a Meteor at 8,000ft at 320mph.



1993

Belize withdrawal

THE WITHDRAWAL of British Forces from Belize, including Harrier and Puma detachments, is completed.

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

Hawaii live oh!

● **Continued from front page**
Brize Norton Tactical Medical Wing's Flt Lt Perry Smith is one of those taking part and will conduct training designed to improve multinational responses across the world.

He said: "Our role is to oversee all medical air assets taking part. We coordinate patient evacuations from ship to shore, on land, or anything in between, while feeding the medical picture back to inform senior decision-making."

"We all operate differently. Understanding how our partners work means we can integrate equipment, personnel, and procedures effectively. Ultimately, that's what allows us to achieve mission success together."

The RAF is no stranger to disaster relief having used C-17 Globemasters and A400 Atlas aircraft from the Oxfordshire airbase to drop food, water and medical supplies into war-torn areas, most recently Gaza.

It also airlifted hundreds of tonnes of building materials and emergency supplies into the Caribbean in the wake of hurricanes Irma and Maria.

Flt Lt Smith said: "To work in a large multinational headquarters and put those skills into practice doesn't happen very often."

"It's an invaluable experience that we can bring back to the



LIFE-SAVER: Flt Lt Perry Smith and Poseidon on Exercise Rimpac, inset above

RAF and share with colleagues."

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Tactical Medical Wing, but the RAF's work in

humanitarian relief dates back to the Berlin Airlift of 1948 when it flew thousands of sorties delivering hundreds of tonnes

of supplies following the Soviet blockade.

"There's no better place to work if aviation medicine is your passion.

It's a busy time for the Wing, but it gives you opportunities like this that are incredibly rewarding," said Flt Lt Smith.

Future aviator? Watch this Space



ROBO RECRUIT?
Top brass meets top alloys as CAS gets hands on with latest tech

Staff Reporter

AIR CHIEFS had a close encounter of the robotic kind at the official opening of the UK Space and Defence Centre.

The King was joined by Chief of the Air Staff ACM Sir Harv Smyth to see first-hand what the future holds for Britain's air and space defence capabilities.

Harwell Science and Innovation Campus in Oxfordshire is Europe's most significant concentration of science and technology talent and home to more than 7,000 people from 260 organisations.

Innovation

ACM Smyth said: "This hub brings together government, industry, academia and investors to drive innovation and strengthen our control and safety in the space domain, which is critical to UK defence."

"Partnerships like the Sustainable Markets Initiative, aligned with His Majesty's Astra Carta, ensure we pursue this growth sustainably, protecting both our planet and space environment."

"We must be responsible users of this vital domain – it is frustrating that many others are not."



Pedal power sustains RAFA

MORE THAN 3,000 cyclists came together in June to take part in RAFA Rides, the RAF Association's global cycling challenge.

Events took place at Kendrew Barracks, RAF Leeming, RAF Marham and RAF Brize Norton, among others, bringing together people from all over the country through a shared purpose and passion.

Cyclists tackled a variety of routes ranging between 12 and 100 miles, while RAFA Rides Your Way allowed cyclists to take part virtually from anywhere in the world.

Among the cyclists at Kendrew Barracks were former Leicester

Tigers teammates Martin Johnson CBE, Matt Poole and Rory Underwood MBE, who is also an ex-RAF pilot.

Liam Clark-Brown, associate director of group marketing, fundraising & trading, said: "It's been fantastic to see so many cyclists take part in RAFA Rides 2026. Whether riding for the challenge, the camaraderie or simply the joy of being on their bikes, every participant has made a real difference. We're truly grateful to everyone who supported us this year, helping ensure we can continue supporting the RAF community."



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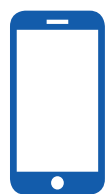
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Bulletin



DRONE INTERCEPTOR: New UK designs will slash the cost of countering mass UAV attacks

£3.2 million to develop interceptors

Simon Mander

THE UK has awarded £3.16 million to three companies to develop low-cost interceptors to counter drone threats, becoming the first European partner to act under a joint defence programme.

The programme is part of a European five-nation effort also backed by Poland, France, Italy and Germany to combat large-scale drone and missile attacks used to overwhelm air defences.

The UK funding will go to Frankenberg Technologies, Greenjets and Cambridge Aerospace, to develop and test new designs as part of the European Low-Cost Effectors and Autonomous Platforms (LEAP) programme.

National Armaments Director Rupert Pearce said: "With the award of these contracts, the programme will demonstrate the powerful, low-cost capabilities we can deliver when we open up Defence and collaborate with some of the UK's most agile, innovative companies."

"We are joining forces across borders to rapidly procure new systems, supporting both the UK and our allies against the growing mass drone threat."

In March, Russia launched the equivalent of more than 200 drones per day into Ukraine, highlighting the scale of the challenge.

Who dares Vins

Simon Mander

REGIMENT DRONEBUSTERS responsible for protecting combat aircraft on Operation Shader have been honoured.

The RAF Regiment's 2 Counter Uncrewed Aerial Systems Wing and 609 Sqn reservist Cpl Carl Vinand are recognised for their outstanding operational achievements by 2 Group.

His work reflects his exceptional contribution to Counter-UAS operations, training and recruitment.

Since joining the RAF Reserve in 2019, Cpl Vinand was the first 609 Sqn Reservist to deploy



AWARD: Cpl Vinand

on Counter-UAS operations on Op Shader – on which he is still deployed.

The Wing was commended for its professionalism, teamwork and operational effectiveness in a highly-demanding environment.

They engaged in detecting, tracking, identifying and defeating hostile aerial threats, safeguarding personnel and aircraft.

609 Sqn OC Sqn Ldr Lovejoy collected the award on behalf of Cpl Vinand, while Cpl Blair of 34 Sqn collected on behalf of the Wing, having recently returned from theatre after operating alongside them.



HONOURED: 609 Sqn's Sqn Ldr Lovejoy (centre) collects the award from AVM John Lyle on behalf of Cpl Vinand

Jupiter rises at Akrotiri



Staff Reporter

Akrotiri

THE UK'S latest Jupiter helicopter made its debut at Akrotiri as 84 Sqn took to the skies over Cyprus.

The Airbus aircraft will carry out aerial firefighting, search and rescue and transport duties with British Forces across the sovereign base areas, replacing the

Puma and Griffin which were both retired from service last year.

The £148 million contract will see six more Jupiter H145 delivered to the RAF, bringing the fleet to a total of 13. Three will be stationed at Akrotiri, operated by 84 Sqn. Three other Jupiter HC2s will be operated in Brunei by the Army Air Corps' 667 Sqn.

The deal is being hailed as a success for military procurement, taking just two years

from the initial order to delivery.

Jupiter HC2 Delivery Duty Holder Wg Cdr Johnny Longland said: "I've been part of this programme for the last two years, and to finally see the capability arrive here is a momentous effort by a lot of people."

"The squadron here have been waiting a year since Puma retired to receive an aircraft back onto 84 Squadron, and to see it flying is brilliant."



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Brize charity ace nets Wimbledon windfall

Staff Reporter

FORCES FUNDRAISING ace Cpl Hayley Court netted a Wimbledon windfall after marking 13 years working courtside at the world-famous tennis tournament.

The Armed Forces Stewards association served up a £3,200 donation to the Healing Military Minds group she set up four years ago to help fight PTSD.

Air Force steward Sgt Bryan Rundle raised the cash selling specially minted coins he designed, celebrating 80 years of military support for the tennis world's biggest grass court showdown.

Brize Norton-based 622 Sqn Reservist Hayley is a familiar figure courtside and says the Wimbledon fortnight is the highlight of her year.

She said: "I love everything about it. It's the best two weeks of my year. I've been doing it since 2012 and the camaraderie is amazing."

forged



amazing friendships with the other stewards and organisers.

"And to top it all I get to have the occasional glass of Pimms in the sun after I've clocked off for the day."

The Wimbledon Foundation made a further £10,000 donation to Combat Stress, the charity Healing Military Minds was set up to support.

The cash bonanza follows the recent Operation Bullseye darts fundraiser organised by Hayley's Air Force pal Cpl Zara Durrant which netted a further £23,000 for HMM, bringing the group's total to £236,000 to fight mental health problems in the UK military.

The group is hoping to top the £250,000 mark with the forthcoming HMM gala ball and auction in September, which has become one of the RAF's social events of the year.

SERVICE GAME: Wimbledon regular Cpl Hayley Court (right) collected a donation of £3,200 for her work combating mental health problems. Inset above, 80th anniversary coin designed by Sgt Bryan Rundle, left



Air chiefs step up security

Simon Mander

SHARPSHOOTERS HAD their sights on protecting Britain's combat jets as personnel were put through security drills at Coningsby.

RAF Regiment instructors taught how to handle the L85A2 rifle – the primary weapon of most – while all aircrew also received training on the Glock 17 pistol.

Lessons also provide pyrotechnics training on the 16mm mini flare, while air traffic controllers train with the 1.5-inch flare gun, used to warn off aircraft.

This year 42 courses are planned and at Coningsby are delivered by just six people.

Officer Commanding WO Lee Hargreaves said: "When rapid deployments are called – and in recent months there have been several, with squadrons going out the door at short notice – this training determines whether

personnel are trained to the required standard to go.

"Miss the marker and a deployment stalls. If we do our job well, no one really knows about it. But if we fail at our job, that's when it would get discussed at the highest levels. We could be a showstopper."

All RAF personnel need Individual Readiness Training and everyone at the Lincolnshire base needs this to module two level to reflect evolving threats.

This includes marksmanship, first aid and Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear awareness with an operational focus.

Coningsby Station Commander, Gp Capt Andy Hampshire, said: "This training is fundamental to everything we do."

"We are rightly proud of our Typhoon force and the operational effect it generates



WEAPONS DRILL: Taking aim at Coningsby

but that capability only exists because every single person on this station is trained and ready. "This small team underpins

the readiness of thousands.

"That is an extraordinary contribution, and one that deserves real recognition."

Bulletin



Summer free-dom

THE RAF Museum Midlands is putting on cost-free summer fun for youngsters.

The Cosford venue is offering free Airfix model-making activities and discount refreshments throughout the school holidays to help cut the expense of a family day out.

● Go to: rafmuseum.org/midlands to check details.



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ON TARGET: Polish player shoots for goal during recent NATO tournament

Poles net Nato cup

WORLD CUP fever hit Nato this month as military football stars went head to head at Gloucester Barracks.

The Polish Air Force team out-gunned the Netherlands, with the UK landing fifth behind the USA in the Allied Air Command event. See p25.

Heads up for next-gen kit

Staff Reporter
Farnborough

AEROSPACE CHIEFS have unveiled a next generation digital pilot's helmet designed to improve situational awareness and support faster decision-making in the multi-domain battlespace.

BAE's Project Intuity demonstrator will act as a testbed, combining emerging and proven technologies within a flexible system architecture that can evolve alongside future mission requirements.

It also provides a platform to explore and mature additional

capabilities, including display optics and eye tracking.

BAE project director Andrew Macklin-Smith said: "As allies move towards aircraft that act as combat command centres, future operations will demand that pilots process more information from more sources than ever before."

"Project Intuity addresses that challenge by integrating the technologies to allow pilots to command fleets of drones in the skies."

"This system will achieve that by filtering and presenting the most important information clearly and within the pilot's natural field of view."



Female fitness guide to boost UK frontline

Tracey Allen

DEFENCE CHIEFS have issued a new female fitness guide to prepare more Forces women for frontline combat roles.

The handbook released this month is designed to ensure women across all three Services have sex-specific guidance on training, nutritional support and health protection, helping to boost the UK's warfighting readiness and effectiveness, the MOD said.

It includes advice on training and recovery, carrying heavy battlefield kit, nutrition, sleep and sexual health, backed by years of physiological research across the international military community.

Titled *The Science of Human Performance*, the guidelines have been developed by the Army Health and Performance Research Team, following trainees and Servicewomen from first selection to senior operational roles.

It also outlines the need for better-designed clothing, improved-fit body armour, urination systems for air crew, emergency period products and free sports bras.

It is authored by experts across Defence and draws on Tri-Service expertise and data gathered since the lifting of restrictions on

women in ground close-combat roles in 2016.

Defence Minister Calvin Bailey said: "Warfighting readiness depends on the strength, resilience and preparation of all our people. I know from my own service that women have always met the toughest standards – but too often without the tailored support they require."

"This guide marks a first for UK Defence – ensuring our Servicewomen have the tailored, evidence-based support they need to perform at their best and succeed in the most demanding roles."

"It is part of our commitment to ensure talent, not background or barriers, determines how far you can go in today's Armed Forces."

Prof Julie Greeves, Technical Research Director in Physiology, added: "Historically, physical performance research has been based on male data."

"This guide changes that, giving Servicewomen the tools to train smarter, reduce injury and stay in service for longer."



FRONTLINE FITNESS: UK Defence chiefs have issued a health and fitness guide for Armed Forces women to increase combat capability. Inset left, Defence Minister Calvin Bailey joins RAF PTIs to launch the programme



News



Jack it up

GUNNERS HIT the training range in the new Jackal as the RAF Regt prepares to take delivery of three of the UK's new light combat vehicles.

2 Sqn tested the new vehicle's upgraded off-road performance, carrying out 50 Cal heavy machine gun drills on the south coast.

The 4x4 Jackal can be fitted with a six-wheel drive system which doubles its load-carrying capacity.

A Regt spokesman said: "Training like this is crucial for the development of the Gunners within the Regiment. The Jackal II was already a class-leader off-road, however the new suspension in the Jackal 3 will deliver even better off-road performance."

Special delivery



Charlotte Williams
Odiham

27 SQN Chinook crews have officially taken over as Nato's Special Operations air unit delivering troops and kit into the combat zone.

The move follows evaluation during key exercises testing UK Chinook crews' rapid-reaction capability as Nato steps up operations across its eastern European borders.

Squadron personnel were issued with their Nato Special Operations patches by Chinook Force Commander Gp Capt Hannah Bishop at a ceremony this month.

The final assessment, testing 800 performance measures, was carried out earlier this year during the UK-based Exercise Hyperion Storm.

Gp Capt Bishop said: "The journey to Nato validation



BADGE OF HONOUR: Gp Capt Hannah Bishop presents 27 Sqn personnel with their NATO patches

is rigorous and demanding, with every aspect of a unit's capability scrutinised through a comprehensive evaluation process.

"Throughout the assessment, 27 Sqn demonstrated its ability to deliver specialist aviation support whenever and wherever it is required. The ultimate endorsement came from Nato's evaluators, who concluded that they would fly anywhere, anytime with 27 Sqn."

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"I think the wider camaraderie and value of sport should not be underestimated. Sport not only improves your fitness, but can give you structure, goals and friendships, to name just a few of the benefits. Whilst sport might feel like a luxury when we are working at capacity and with the operational tempo increasing, the resilience sport helps foster will ultimately benefit our service in the longer term."

Squadron Leader Sam May

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AGES 3-18

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Bulletin



WEAPONS DRILL: USAF tech Sgt Nicholas Boggs joins RAF Armourers at Lakenheath for weapons training

Lock & load

AIR FORCE Armourers got a weapons brief as they joined the USAF's 48th Munitions Sqn at Lakenheath.

The bilateral training session is designed to boost ground teams' knowledge of the latest networked weapons used on fifth-generation platforms and their ability to work across aircraft types.



THE RED Arrows hit New York's Times Square ahead of their spectacular aerobatic display over the Statue of Liberty to mark the USA's 250th anniversary of Independence.

The team completed a month-long tour of America in the lead-up to the nationwide celebrations to mark the historic date.

Red 1, Wg Cdr Jon Bond, said: "Flying over New York on the occasion of the 250th anniversary was a huge honour."

NATO chiefs look North

Allies flex air power on Article Five drill

NATO CREWS are honing their combat skills on its Northern borders in the latest war drills showcasing the Alliance's ability to respond to an attack on a member state.

Voyager crews are operating alongside 18 other nations carrying out refuelling sorties to keep F-16, Rafale, Tornado and Gripen jets in the fight during the multi-domain combat exercise Ramstein Flag, supported by the UK's Carrier Strike Group.

A Nato spokesman said: "This provides a robust platform for all Nato's members to demonstrate their commitment to the Alliance's 360-degree approach.

"Our approach to preparedness is taking centre stage, which directly enhances combat readiness to respond to Article 5 scenarios if required, signalling



SECURITY PLEDGE: German Tornado GR4s take on fuel from a RAF Voyager during NATO exercise

Allied resolve and unity toward any potential adversary.

"We are moving away from traditional air policing in favour of a highly flexible, multi-domain air defence approach to maintain collective security across Europe."

Now in its 26th year, Ramstein Flag is taking place across Finland, Sweden and Norway, focusing on interoperability between nations across the air and cyber domains.

Air-to-air refuelling across

Nato's air combat fleet is crucial to the success of operations, air chiefs say.

In a single sortie, 10 Sqn Voyager aircrew refuelled fighter jets from the Czech Republic, Sweden, France, and Germany.

A 10 Sqn Voyager pilot said: "Operating from Finland, Sweden and Norway gives us experience of the High North.

"The Voyager force has flown 10 missions during this period, demonstrating not only the

aircraft's impressive range but also its ability to project air power by giving almost 50 tonnes of fuel away on our biggest day, significantly extending the operational reach of our partner aircraft."

United States Air Force and Finnish Air Force personnel collaborated to refuel UK F-35B Lightning II jets at Tampere-Pirkkala Air Base in Finland, testing ground crews' ability to operate in austere and extreme environments.



FALL IN: Falcons get grid-side at the recent British Grand Prix at Silverstone

Silverstone jump start

THE FALCONS jumped into action at the recent British F1 Grand Prix performing their latest aerial display in front of an estimated 300,000 crowd of race fans at Silverstone.

The Brize chute-ing stars descended beneath their trademark red, white and blue canopies ahead of the start of one of the blockbuster sports events of the summer.

Falcons chief Flt Lt Compton-Davies said: "Performing at Silverstone is always a privilege. The support from the crowd was incredible and the team were proud to represent the RAF on such a prestigious stage."

HONOURING

Air chiefs and families pay their respects to the Battle of Britain heroes

SARAH HAWES
Capel-le-Ferne

ALLIED AIR chiefs and relatives gathered at Capel le Ferne to honour the memory of the heroes of the Battle of Britain.

The last of the fabled Few passed into history in 2025 following the death of the final surviving fighter pilot, Paddy Hemingway, at the age of 105.

Families and VIPs paid their respects above the Kent coast's White Cliffs as they marked the 86th anniversary of the epic fight for the nation's skies.

Among those remembered was Northern Ireland's Wg Cdr Ken Mackenzie DFC AFC, who died in 2009.

Nicknamed 'Super Mac,' he earned his DFC for skilfully knocking an Me109 out of the sky with the wing of his Hurricane, after he had run out of bullets.

He then crash-landed his aircraft less than half a mile from where the ceremony was held.

The service was attended by the Lord Lieutenant of Kent, Lady Colgrain, and CAS, ACM Sir Harv Smyth, as guest of honour. Delegations also came from Australia, Canada, France, New Zealand and Poland.

Guests were treated to a flypast of a Spitfire from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, flown by Sqn Ldr Alistair Luckins, which gave a victory roll over the Memorial.

Tributes were then laid at the Christopher Foxley-Norris Memorial Wall, where the family of Flt Lt William Walker read his poem *Our Wall*, which is inscribed on a plinth at the left end of the Memorial. His great-grandchildren Leo and Zara recalled meeting their great-grandfather before he died aged 99 in 2015.

Their parents remembered him telling them about being shot down, being recovered by a fishing boat and having a bullet removed from his ankle – which he asked to keep.

His son David said: "His main complaint was the scant training; they were just chucked into an aircraft because they could fly and off they went. They hoped for the best.

"When he was waiting to be found, he wondered if that fishing boat was the English or the Germans."

Granddaughter Fiona said: "When the Spitfire went over today, I start shaking. I envisage my grandfather in that rickety plane, doing

this at night, with planes on fire, fighting for his country. I just can't imagine it – it's impossible. I really miss him."

David Rosier was visiting to remember his father ACM Sir Frederick Rosier, who was shot down with the cockpit's canopy jammed. The aircraft blew up and Fred found himself in mid-air. He pulled his parachute to land safely but suffered burns.

A trustee of the Memorial, David said: "My father was lucky – after being shot down in flames, he didn't fly in the most difficult parts of the battle. He didn't speak much about it – these young men did what they had to."

Another trustee, Deborah Burns, comes to the Memorial every year to remember husband Flt Lt Owen Burns.

He was caught in an enemy raid while returning from a night patrol over the North Sea. One of three aircraft, he crash-landed. The observer was killed, the pilot spent a year in hospital, but Flt Lt Burns sustained only a broken collar bone.

Penny Draper, whose father PO Gilbert Draper was shot down over Ashford in his Spitfire, remembered his courage.

She said: "My dad was 19; the fear, the realities of going up and flying, not knowing if you would come down again, or if your friends would too.

"We think he was seen baling out by a doctor who followed where he landed and he was rescued."

Air Cdre Eric Burchmore was a junior airman at Kenley during the Battle of Britain as a ground engineer; and his family travelled from Scotland to see his memorial tile on the 'Blade of Honour' for the first time. For his work on the introduction of the Harrier, Eric was later awarded the CBE.

Family members of both Polish and Czechoslovak pilots who joined the RAF travelled to pay their respects and meet with other families.

Alex Scott's Czechoslovak father Jaromir Strihavka had served in both the Czechoslovak and French air forces before the Battle of Britain and although he didn't see combat at this time of the war, he did later in his service.

His father didn't tell him too much about his service – Alex found out after his death, during historical research.

Alex comes every year from his home in Cambridge, to honour his father and other Service personnel, laying a wreath on behalf of the Memorial Association for Free Czechoslovak Veterans.



G THE FEW



PAYING TRIBUTE TO GREAT-GRANDDAD:
Leo and Zara Walker
with CAS, ACM Smyth

TOP BRASS: Air
chiefs for Canada,
Australia, UK and
New Zealand were
in attendance at
Memorial, left



LAST OF THE FEW: Paddy
Hemingway and, inset,
RAF Spitfire



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

Elaine Paxton has always believed in teams.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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



Bumper grads day



A BIG HIT: The mammoth graduation day is the new normal, according to air chiefs. Below, a hug from a loved one

PHOTOS: RAF HALTON

A TOTAL of 149 recruits – the largest number in well over 10 years – graduated from Pearson Intake at RAF Halton recently.

The Reviewing Officer was Air Officer Commanding Number 22 Group, AVM Ian Sharrocks, and the flypast was by an A400M from 70 Sqn.

AVM Sharrocks said: “As Reviewing Officer, it was a great privilege to witness 149 aviators on parade today – the largest graduation parade RAF Halton has seen for many years.

“These graduates represent the next generation of war fighters who will underpin our air and space power for years to come”

“This was clear and tangible evidence of the Royal Air Force’s commitment to growing the trained force and strengthening our operational capability.

“These graduates represent the next generation of war

Most new recruits in a Halton intake for over a decade

fighters who will underpin our air and space power for years to come. I take great pride in their achievement and in the efforts of the instructors and staff whose dedication has made this milestone a reality.

“We continue to improve our agility, integration and readiness to fly, fight and win.”

Commandant Aviator Training Academy, Gp Capt John Hethering, added: “Graduating 149 recruits on a single parade is a powerful demonstration of what the Aviator Training Academy is delivering in support of the RAF’s workforce recovery. This is the new normal and the result of two years of work across the Service.

“This is more than a number – it represents increased capability for the frontline and real progress towards growing operational strength. I am immensely proud of both the recruits and the staff who have made this possible.”

Trophy winners:

- Rothschild Trophy (IFPT) – AR Cullen
- Halton Aircraft Apprentice Trophy (Drill and Deportment) – AR Matthews
- Halton Aircraft Apprentice Shield (PED) – AR Taylor
- Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire (Greatest Improvement during Basic Recruit Training Course) – AR Swain
- RAF Benevolent Fund Trophy (Greatest willingness to help others) – AR Dawson
- Mayor of Aylesbury Trophy (Greatest determination and perseverance during Basic Recruit Training Course) – AR Cullen
- Dusty Miller Memorial Trophy (Upheld RAF core values) – AR Yilmaz
- Lord Trenchard Trophy (Most outstanding recruit on intake) – AR Drobný.





'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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ESPORTS FOR THE ARMED FORCES



Images: BFBS/British Esports/Jonas Kontaitas

ON MAY 22, 1946, a small trainer aircraft designed by Polish engineer Wsiewolod Jakimiuk took to the air for the first time in Canada. Eighty years later, the de Havilland Chipmunk continues to unite former Air Cadets, fast-jet pilots, airline captains and aviation enthusiasts through a shared experience that helped shape countless careers.

To mark the anniversary, dozens of Chipmunks gathered at Halfpenny Green Airport near Wolverhampton in May. Some 21 aircraft flew in formation over the former de Havilland factory at Broughton, forming the number '80' in the sky above the site where many were built. It was a fitting tribute to an aircraft that remains woven into the story of the Royal Air Force.

Of the 1,283 Chipmunks built worldwide, 735 entered RAF service. For generations of Air Cadets, University Air Squadron (UAS) students and Service pilots, the Chipmunk represented a first encounter with military aviation. The smell of avgas, the bark of the Gipsy Major engine and the sight of the world dropping away beneath the wings became formative experiences for many, both inside and outside the military.

Although the type was retired from Air Experience Flying in 1996, two Chipmunks remain in RAF service today with the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, where they are used to convert pilots onto tailwheel aircraft before progressing to the Hurricane and Spitfire.

Affection

Why does an 80-year-old trainer still evoke such affection among generations of RAF personnel?

Part of the answer lies in the fact that the lessons it taught remain as relevant today as they were in 1946.

For 19-year-old pilot Will Garner, flying a Chipmunk has provided an unexpected connection with previous generations of aviators. Having completed Elementary Flying Training on the Grob Tutor and flown with Northumbrian UAS, he represents a generation raised on modern aircraft and contemporary training methods.

Yet he found familiar lessons waiting in the cockpit of the Chipmunk.

"The fundamentals of learning to fly haven't changed nearly as much as you might expect," he says. "Sitting in the cockpit, you realise that pilots my age were learning the same lessons, facing the same challenges and building the same skills over 70 years ago."

Almost every Chipmunk story eventually becomes a story about an instructor. For former pilot Sqn Ldr (Ret'd) Mike Neil, the aircraft formed a constant thread

Why RAF still loves the Chipmunk 80 years on



WP903: Royal Chipmunk

RAF BATTLE OF BRITAIN MEMORIAL FLIGHT: Chipmunks taking off at Old Warden in Bedfordshire

PHOTO: GARRY LAKIN

Copies of the book up for grabs

YOU COULD win a copy of *Chipmunk at 80*, by Ben Griffiths and Ian Black, signed by the authors. For your chance to own one, tell us:

At which station did Prince Charles go solo in a Chipmunk in 1969?

Email your answer, marked Chipmunk 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 August 7.

Win!



YOUNG PILOT: Will Garner at Fenland

handles perfectly. It became, and has remained, my favourite flying machine to this day."

For Perrins, as for many others, the Chipmunk was not merely a stepping stone to bigger aircraft. It was an aircraft worthy of affection in its own right.

Its legacy even extends to the Royal Family. On January 14, 1969, HRH Prince Charles went solo in Chipmunk WP903 at RAF Basingbourn after 14 hours and 30 minutes of instruction from Sqn Ldr Philip Pinny. Nearly four decades later, the same aircraft appeared at RAF College Cranwell during HRH Prince William's Wings Graduation Parade.

Today, WP903 remains one of the most recognisable Chipmunks still flying, serving as a reminder that the fundamentals of aviation training are universal. Whether future king, air cadet or fast-jet pilot, every aviator begins by learning the same essential skills. Perhaps that is why the aircraft continues to resonate so strongly.

Eight decades after its first flight, the Chipmunk remains far more than an aeroplane. For some it represents a first taste of freedom. For others, the beginning of a military career. For many, it is simply a reminder of the instructor, the airfield and the moment aviation first got into their blood.

Ben Griffiths

● *Chipmunk at 80*, by Ben Griffiths and Ian Black, is published this summer (rrp £37.99 + P&P). To buy it, visit chipmunkat80.carrd.co



VETERAN: Mike Neil in Cold War Chipmunk

PHOTO: KIERON PILBEAM

throughout a career that included flying the Piston Provost, Vampire and multi-engine transport aircraft before becoming deeply involved in flying instruction and Air Experience Flying.

Between operational tours and postings, Neil repeatedly returned to teaching. He instructed at

flying selection units, University Air Squadrons and later commanded 6 Air Experience Flight at RAF Abingdon, helping introduce countless young people to aviation.

Years later, at a scholarship dinner, he approached Ian Smith, then OC of the BBMF. "I might

know how to do your job," Neil joked. "Mike, you bugger," came the reply. "You taught me to fly."

Smith's first logbook entry had been in a Chipmunk during flying selection at RAF Swindon, with Neil in the instructor's seat.

When Smith eventually retired, he requested that his final flight should once again be with Neil in a BBMF Chipmunk. It turned out to be one that Neil had flown at RAF Gatow during Cold War spy missions.

It was a fitting illustration of the lasting influence good instructors can have on those they teach.

The Chipmunk has also launched countless aviation careers.

Former RAF fast-jet and display pilot Bill Perrins, later a Vulcan display captain, still regards the Chipmunk as his favourite aircraft.

"To me, the Chippy is a mini-Spitfire," he wrote in his memoir. "It possesses many of that epic machine's qualities: it looks right, smells of a certain age and



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RAF News

The official voice of the Royal Air Force

WHILE WILLIAM (Bill) Bradley was serving with 6 Squadron during the North African campaign in World War II, he was sketching and keeping a visual record of his time there. His grandson, Peter Dignan, has had talented artist Bill's charming drawings preserved and made into a book, now on sale to raise money for a military charity.

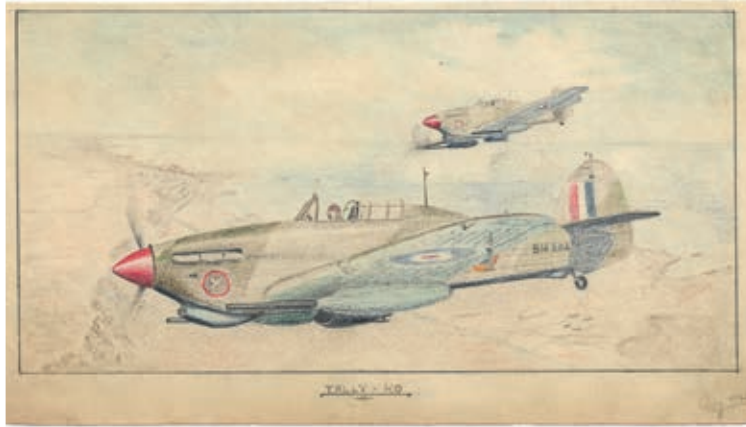
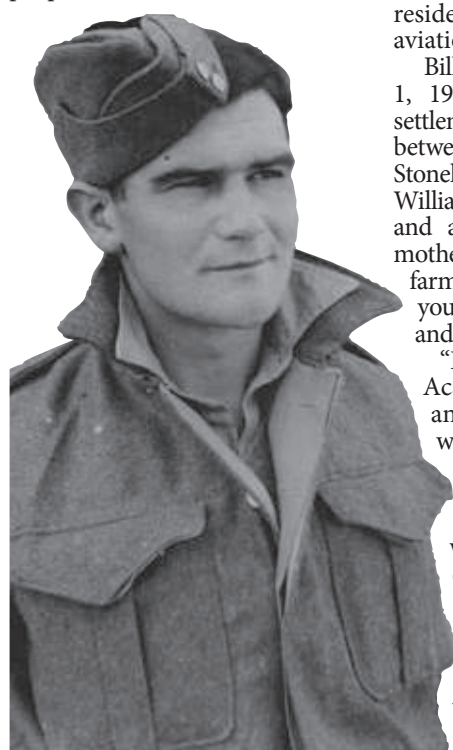
Peter said: "Bill was a young artist from Stonehaven who sketched scenes from his final months at home, his journey overseas, and daily life on deployment."

"The drawings were loose and fragile, so I began a preservation project to ensure they weren't lost. During that process the artwork was professionally scanned, and the idea of collating them into a book took shape. The result is a visual record of wartime life through the eyes of a 20-year-old RAF Serviceman."

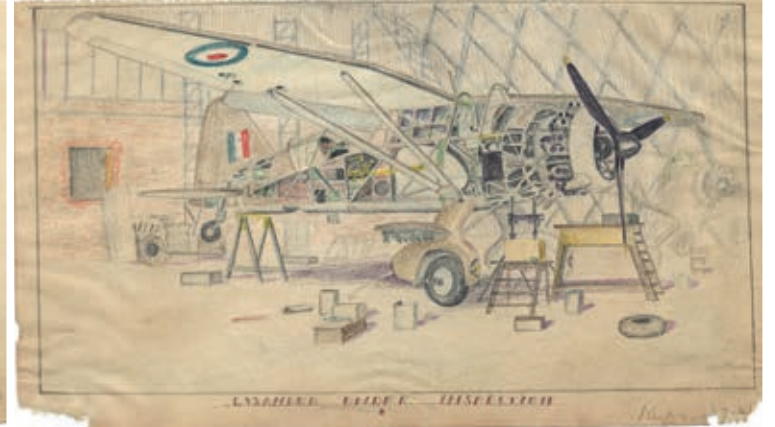
Low-Level Light, Sketches From The Desert War has been published to raise funds for Operation Cairngorms, a Community Interest Company supporting military veterans. The charity's mission, said a spokesperson, is "to reconnect members of the military family through the outdoors, community, purpose, and meaningful human connection."

The spokesperson explained: "Based within a private woodland in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, OPGC delivers rural residential experiences designed to support veterans, serving personnel, military families, and those navigating significant periods of transition in life. In 2025 alone, over 160 members of the military family attended the woodland veterans programme."

"*Low-Level Light* will not only help generate much-needed funding for Operation Cairngorms, but will also raise wider awareness of the impact that nature, connection and purpose can have on mental



TALLY-HO: 6 Squadron Hurricane, 2D, with 40mm Cannon, August 1942



INSIDE THE HANGAR: Kufra, Lysander Under Inspection, September 1941

The North African Campaign through the eyes – and art – of a young airman

health and recovery."

Peter added: "My grandfather was a prolific artist and model maker. His fascination with flight began in childhood, and much of his creative output – both artwork and models – centred around military aircraft. His paintings adorn many homes across the northeast of Scotland, and several of his aircraft models reside in private collections and aviation museums."

Bill (left) was born on June 1, 1920, in Rickarton, a small settlement in Aberdeenshire between Banchory and Stonehaven. His father, also called William, was the local postman and a dedicated beekeeper. His mother, Isabella, ran their small farm and cared for Bill and his younger siblings: Hugh, Izzo and Rose.

"Bill attended Stonehaven Academy, where he showed an early aptitude for art. He was offered an architecture scholarship to Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen, but the outbreak of WWII would steer his life in a different direction," said Peter.

He explained: "During school holidays, I was often packed off to stay with my grandparents where they later lived on



TOBRUK: Stuka attacks airfield, 1941

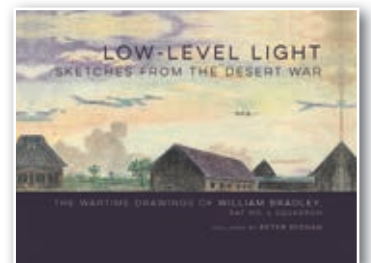
the Coxton estate near Elgin. Bill always had an ongoing art or model-building project, and I would sit beside him, firing off questions about the world. He told me stories about the war – the places he'd been, the things he'd seen – and I would listen, utterly engrossed.

"By all accounts, he had a 'good war,' and looking back, I think it had been something of an adventure for him. He contracted malaria during his service, and every so often he'd begin to shiver and get the chills. He'd be sent off to bed until the fever broke, and then life would return to normal."

"He was once bitten by a scorpion while hiding in a foxhole during a Stuka dive-bomber attack and had to suck out the venom as bombs exploded around him. He told me the closest he ever came to being shot was while sitting in his tent – a stray bullet pierced the bristles of his hairbrush [below], which lay on the desk beside him."

Bill joined the RAF in 1940 aged 20. He completed basic training at RAF Padgate then transferred to RAF Yatesbury. He was assigned to 6 Sqn as a radio operator and in January 1941, shipped out aboard the *Duchess of Richmond*, a 22,000-ton merchant vessel bound for the West Coast of Africa.

Peter added: "Among Bill's most prized possessions was a collection of sketches he had drawn before and during the war. These sketches document his final months in Stonehaven, his training in England, the voyage to Africa, and his time with 6 Sqn during the African campaign."



NEW BOOK: Raising money for charity

"As a child, I would sit and flick through the drawings, trying to imagine the moments and the places. I could hear the planes, visualise the scorpions, and smell the desert. The drawings captivated me then, as they still do today."

After the war Bill became a professional artist and was an art teacher for adults. He also had a television repair business.

When Bill died in 2008, aged 88, Peter's grandmother gifted the collection of drawings to him.

He said: "It is a pictorial diary of Bill's time during the African campaign. It contains his drawings in their raw form and photographs of personal wartime objects. Each drawing is annotated with the original notes he left behind."

● *Low-Level Light* (rrp £25) can be bought online from: theadventurerscabin.com or from Deeside Books, Ballater and George Strachan, Aboyne.



AUDI A6 E-TRON SPORTBACK: Plasma blue, or is it grey...?

Audi's EV A6 still king of the road

AUDI'S A6 has been the king of the motorway/autobahn for decades. It has always been the benchmark for high-speed, long-distance motoring, with a range of powerful engines. When Audi sent me this version, I was therefore intrigued, because electric vehicles are not usually known for their high-speed, long-range performance.

Exterior

Words don't really do it justice. It is a stunning saloon and more slippery than a politician on breakfast TV. It's the most aerodynamic Audi ever built. If you want high-speed, long-range capability from an EV, you're going to need an edge and the A6 e-tron starts by eliminating atmospheric resistance.

The shape attracts a lot of attention and we had several people wanting to photograph the car, which is unusual for a saloon. Then there's the colour. This is plasma blue, a subtle shade that shifts between grey and blue, depending on the light/angle that you view it from. I think it's fair to say that it's a good-looking car.

Interior

At first glance, the cabin is exactly what you'd expect from

an Audi A6. There are epic levels of space and everything looks suitably plush, but here's the thing, plush comes with added weight and that's something that saps range in an EV. Audi has thought about this and subtly shaved off a few pounds by slimming things down below the eyeline. If you look hard, you'll notice a few more lightweight plastics than we're used to in an A6, but you have to go looking for them, it's not obvious.

The seats are supremely comfortable, as usual, and the driving position remains good. You can't sink quite as low behind the wheel as in A6s of old, due to the battery pack under the floor, but it's a reasonable compromise.

If your eco-warrior, vegan principles get the better of you, you can spec a leather-free interior option that keeps your conscience completely clear. On the other hand, if you want to serenade the wildlife and everyone else with your favourite tunes, the Bang & Olufsen sound system is incredibly LOUD. It even comes with headrest speakers, so sound comes from all around your head. It is one of the best sound systems I've encountered in a car.

The digital dash display is an

11.9in monitor and sits in the same curved panel as the giant 14.5in infotainment screen. If you've gone for the Edition 1 trim (like our test car) you'll also get a 10.9in touchscreen that allows your front seat co-pilot to change the tunes, or programme the satnav. The menus are slick, logically set out and come with some useful shortcuts. The head-up display is slick too, with sharp, animated graphics.

The lack of physical buttons is a little disappointing, with no climate control panel and no switches to control the lights. Instead, you get a very busy panel on the driver's door, that operates mirror adjustment, lights and memorised seat positions. You can learn to live with it, but it's not ideal.

On the road

Rebooting the A6 is not without its dangers. This is one of the best motorway machines ever built and that reputation could be destroyed by too many compromises.

Audi has walked a fine line here, to create an EV that is just as smooth, slick and dynamic as the petrol icon it replaces.

The steering's a little light and there's no feedback through the

wheel, but everything is solid and sharp. It glides along winding, undulating roads and the chassis inspires confidence. It still feels like an A6 and delivers plenty of grip through the bends.

The Performance model (our test car) came with a single 375bhp motor that powered the rear wheels.

It's a classic combo that gives the A6 e-tron an authentic character. 0-62mph is achieved in 5.4 seconds and it tops out at 130mph. Acceleration is predictably smooth and progressive, avoiding the usual 'flick of a switch' go that comes with many EVs. A lot of that is down to the 2,185kg kerbweight.

Motorway miles are effortless, with 417lb ft of torque under your right foot for rapid overtakes.

Sound deadening and noise cancellation work wonders to ensure peaceful serenity on a run and wind/road noise are well contained.

Finally, the energy efficiency is impressive. Even I got close to 3.6 mi/kWh on a mixed drive through town, country and motorway. That easily gave me 250 miles on a single charge. Then there's the charging speed, which is always important when you're on a deadline. The 270kW charge rate took the car from 10 to 80 per cent in 22 minutes, which is pretty good going.

Pros

- Supreme motorway manners
- Long battery range
- Comfortable cabin
- Still king of the motorway

Cons

- Some controls are fiddly
- Rear head room not great
- Fairly pricey

Verdict

The A6 has evolved into the EV generation well,

Audi A6 e-tron

delivering long-range capability, quick charging speeds and effortless motorway cruising. With a stylish interior and a new, sleek body shape, the Audi A6 e-tron is a very appealing electric executive car and remains the best in the business for long motorway commutes.

HOCKEY

UKAF go Dutch

RAF HOCKEY stars were front and centre in a thrilling 3-1 UKAF defeat of the Dutch Armed Forces at Aldershot in a rare international fixture.

The win – the team's first international engagement since 2015 – saw the side superbly led and captained by aviator Cpl Rebekah Douglas.

A team spokesperson said: "Producing a performance like this against the Dutch, given their global reputation, is a significant achievement."

Arriving in strong form, the hosts started with intent as early pressure earned them a penalty corner which, despite an initial Dutch clearance, was converted at the second phase by RAF Cpl Sarah Bracey.

UKAF's sustained attacking continued to pay dividends, as

the hosts doubled their advantage soon after, with Bracey showing composure to net her second of the match.

Renowned for their technical quality, the visitors responded with periods of sustained pressure, stretching the UKAF defence.

In return the Armed Forces women produced a series of near misses before the visitors' intensity paid off in the third quarter when a strike from a penalty corner reduced the deficit to 2-1 to set up a competitive final period.

Despite the setback, UKAF showed composure and resilience dominating possession through the later stages with strong link play and disciplined defending. This was rewarded with a decisive late goal to secure a 3-1 victory.

MOTORSPORT

Brad Burns it up on long road to TT goal

CPL BRAD Burn has a mountain to climb if he is to race in next year's Isle of Man TT.

Boscombe Down-based Burn needs to qualify for the accreditation – known as the 'mountain licence' – which would allow him to enter the 2027 Manx GP and race the prestigious event.

WO Alan Sharp said: "Racing on closed roads for 37 miles, through villages and over mountains at speeds well over 150mph with stonewalls and road furniture only feet away, takes huge skill and immense bravery to compete in this gruelling event."

"Burn is already a highly-proficient track racer on the UK circuits, always in the top five

in the Inter-Service races, he's now making the step towards a full road racing career. To do this it is mandated to race on the roads, mainly in Ireland, to gain the valuable experience to achieve his lifelong dream."

Burn has already competed twice in Ireland at the Cookstown 100 and the Tandragee 100, and recently raced at Oliver's Mount in Scarborough in the Barry Sheene festival – aboard his self-prepared R6 SuperSport, finishing 17th and 18th.

Sharp added: "The aviator will compete in a further three road races this summer, which should then allow him to achieve his goal to become an Isle of Man TT racer."

MOTORSPORT



OLD SKOOL:
Cpl Dean Turner
on his way to
three class wins

3 and easy for Turner at Brands

Hat-trick hero homes in on title

THE SERVICE'S classic bike racers turned up the heat at Brands Hatch with Sgt Dean Turner maintaining his unbeaten run in the season's fourth round event.

Turner again dominated the Old Skool 1000 class, not only gaining another three first places in class, but also recording a hugely impressive second and third overall when racing against the newer bikes.

After winning every class race over four rounds, Turner looks odds on to win the title.

In the 126-lap endurance event, Cpl Sam Boot, Cpl Joe Culyer and WO Alan Sharp raced against a massive grid totalling 52 teams, alongside



DRAMA: Cpl Sam Boot crashes on lap 4 of the IS race. He didn't suffer serious injury

top European competition.

An eventful race featuring current British Superbike champion Kyle Ryde was hit by a downpour which caused havoc,

but the aviators held on to secure eighth in class and 25th overall.

The Sunday Military Inter-Service Race was strongly contested but Turner won through, with RAF riders dominating the top-10.

Sharp said: "The IS win, added to the great successes from the previous rounds, sees us take a good points haul into the next round at Cadwell Park."

"Before that, four riders will be taking on a massive personal and engineering challenge, the Anglesey 12-hour endurance race, with a single motorcycle – a true test of both man and machine. Fingers crossed for all mechanical gremlins to stay away, along with the Welsh weather."

ISLE OF MAN
DREAM: Cpl
Brad Burns
BJB PHOTOS



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

CRICKET

Second best

UKAF'S FINEST players faced Surrey's Second XI at Vine Lane for a tough, battling day of cricket against one of the sport's county big guns.

Led by Flt Lt Adam Fisher, the Armed Forces team won the toss and decided to bat, with aviator Cpl Tom Shorthouse taking on the attack from the start.

A high point for the RAF man was sending a ball from Surrey bowler Seb Stuart-Reckling over the boundary, before falling for 18 as he edged a French delivery to be caught behind.

Sitting 37-1 Fisher, whose brother Matthew plays for Surrey but missed the clash on England duty, fell – caught behind as UKAF sat 51-2, before going to 75-3, 132-4 then 132-5 as Surrey put the hammer down, before closing on 194 all out.

UKAF did well to keep the score down when the county side took to the crease, but lost by eight wickets.

Fisher said: "It was great to face Surrey seconds, we knew it would be tough but it is always good to pit yourselves against top-tier county professionals and rising stars."

"The fixture served as a prestigious summer test."

Cpl Ollie Rogoff and Flt Lt Sam Moorby made up the RAF selection on the day.



RAF STAR:
Cpl Tom Shorthouse

CYCLING



VICTORS: Cpl Danielle Riley, right, and Cpl Dan Roskell, inset above

The life of Riley

Cpl Danielle reigns supreme in Scotland

Daniel Abrahams

TWO DAYS of racing produced a fiver of winners as RAF MTB hit Northeast Scotland for

round 3 of the Inter-Station race series.

The event, hosted by RAF Lossiemouth Mountain Bike Club, consisted of a practice day

followed by a mash-up enduro, then some competitive racing in difficult conditions.

Cpl Danielle Riley won the female event, Cpl Daniel Roskell the hardtail, with Sgt Ian Churchill first in the E-bike category, racing ahead of AS1 Joey Do Rego and FS Craig Hartley.

AS1 Dylan Henry-Williams topped the non-team event, over AS1 Thomas Metcalfe and Gavin Wilkie.

AS1 Toby Blunstone took the open male discipline, with AS1 Henry-Williams and AS1 Metcalfe coming second and third respectively.

A team spokesperson said: "The hot conditions provided ample challenges in both fitness and riding skill, with riders facing 30°C temperatures and some seriously dusty, loose and steep trails."

"There was time to be found and fun to be had however for those brave enough to stay off the brakes on the three classic enduro-style tracks."

● Follow RAF MTB on Instagram @rafgravitymtb.



HOPEFULS: Aviators at the University of Bath track

training ahead of the start of her pre-season preparations.

Etchells added: "The next RAF Skeleton trials will take place at the University of Bath on September 9. Further details can be obtained on our social media pages."

● Follow RAF Skeleton on Instagram @raf_skeleton_team.

RUGBY UNION



HEROICS: Daisy against the Tongans

Aspinall joins Fg Off Bonar at Quins

RAF AND UKAF rugby union star AS1 Daisy Aspinall made it an aviator one-two after joining Premiership Women's Rugby team Harlequins for the new season.

Aspinall follows in the footsteps of Fg Off Sarah Bonar, who joined the club in 2021 and was given a contract extension last season.

The winger, best known for her speed in attack, made the Quins move from Gloucester-Hartbury having also played for England Under-18s and Under-20s.

She said: "I'm so excited to have the opportunity to become part of this iconic Harlequins club."

"To finish off long-term rehab with this group and pull on a new shirt is something I've been working towards for so long, and I cannot wait to get started with the team."

Aspinall rose to fame after running in five tries in UKAF women's record 105-0 International Defence Rugby Competition win over Tonga in their opening clash on their way to the semi-final.

Head Coach at the West London club, Ross Chisholm, said: "We're excited to welcome Daisy to Harlequins next season. She is a young player with a lot of talent, who we feel can really develop and progress within our environment."

"We've seen how much potential she has already at club, university and age-grade international level and I believe she can continue to develop and progress wearing the Quarters."

"Daisy is a winger with plenty of pace, but also has a really strong all-round game. I'm looking forward to seeing what she can do wearing a Harlequins shirt."

SKELETON

Push for selection

WINTER SPORT was the order of the day as sliders battled the recent heatwave for the Service's annual skeleton trials at the University of Bath.

The event, held at the home of the UK's only dedicated push track, saw more than 30 personnel bid to catch the eye of selectors for this year's RAF Championships and Inter-Service squads.

Skeleton team OIC RANK Shawnie Etchells said: "The trials provided an excellent starting pool of athletes to identify potential talent for our novice event in Königssee this December."

"The testing programme included 30-metre sprint time trials, a standing broad jump, and a series of timed efforts on the push track to assess each athlete's speed, power and pushing ability."

The trials also saw one of the Service's big guns present, as Olympian Flt Lt Nicole Burger took the opportunity to complete valuable push

FOOTBALL



GOAL-MOUTH ACTION: Polish Air Force were victorious

Pole-axed

FOOTBALL IS definitely not coming home for the UK's AIRCOM team.

British men's and women's sides played out the Allied Air Command football tournament at Gloucester Barracks in Grantham, with Poland triumphing and Holland runners-up.

AIRCOM is a NATO Defence Engagement event where five nations – UK, Netherlands, Belgium, Poland and USA – come together to play sport, with the aim of improving relationships and understanding before working together on deployments.

With separate men's and women's sides, the points from games went towards one overall combined country total. Featuring several RAF players, the UK team finished last, with Belgium third and USA fourth.

Head of RAF Sport, Air Commodore Rich Fogden, said: "The Nato AIRCOM Sports Programme provides an excellent opportunity for us to operate with and get to know better some of our friends and Allies.

"The football tournament, held with thanks to the Prince William of Gloucester Barracks in Grantham, was just such an example of how we do mission rehearsal through sport.

"We operated in austere conditions, coped with some relatively extreme weather, and played in direct competition with each other, all culminating in stronger bonds being forged at the Awards Dinner at the end.

"I think the value added by this type of activity should not be under-estimated and my thanks go to my team, the RAFFA, and all nations involved for bringing it all together."

The AIRCOM series sees each country taking turns to host an event over a two-year cycle. There are six disciplines: tennis, volleyball, cross-country, basketball, athletics and football, with teams of approximately 20 personnel attending from each nation, including representatives from the sports association, physios and coaches.



WATERSKIING



FG OFF ALEX: Solid display lands title

Alex the Great

Fg Off rules the waves at Queensford

THE KINGS and queens of Service waterski were crowned at this year's RAF Championship after a week of white-hot action.

Oxford Waterski Club's Queensford Lakes saw Fg Off Alex take the overall championship title, without winning an event outright. Solid work throughout the competition – with a third in the Slalom and runner-up in the Advanced Trick – sealed the deal.

Runner-up AS1(T) Alex took the Advanced Trick, with third in the Advanced Jump, while Flt Lt Jack, third overall, won the Advanced Jump.

The championship saw a field of 24 competitors, including two University Air Squadron students, eager to experience the competition.

One standout performance came from Sgt Patrick, who had never waterskied before but progressed onto a mono ski by the end of the first day – going on to win the Novice Trick event over Sqn Ldr Rosie and Wg Cdr Andrew.

The midweek introduction of the jump discipline saw experienced



FLT LT LUCY: Slalom queen

waterskier Flt Lt Jack return to the ramp to showcase his skills, while three novice jumpers bravely attempted the discipline for the first time. Fg Off Dexter came runner-up in the event, with AS1(T) Alex third.

After three days of focused training, competition day saw Novice, Intermediate and Advanced disciplines across Slalom, Tricks and Jump.

The Novice Trick event added an extra layer of entertainment, with bonus points awarded for competitors willing to embrace fancy dress while demonstrating their skills. The event went to AS1 Thomas.

Flt Lt Lucy took the Advanced Slalom over Sqn Ldr David and Fg Off Alex. Sgt Patrick took the Intermediate Slalom, with Gp Capt Martin and Sqn Ldr James second and third.

Novice Ladies Slalom was won by Sqn Ldr Rosie, with Off Cdt Katie and Off Cdt Harriet second and third, while AS1 Thomas won the men's event with Cpl Alfie runner-up and Wg Cdr Andrew third.

AS1 Alex took the Advanced Trick over Fg Off Alex and Flt Lt Michael.

An association spokesperson said: "Expectations for the Inter-Service Championships in September are high."

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

SWIMMING



RESILIENT: RAF Cross Channel Relay Race swimmers head back after challenge

Daniel Abrahams

THE RAF Swimming Association has won the jewel in its 100th anniversary crown – the Cross Channel Relay Race.

The aviators beat their valiant opponents, the CISM German Triathlon team, in the gruelling open water slog from Dover's Shakespeare Beach.

Off Cdt Langdown had the task of the final leg and clambering up the rocks and clear of the water – completing the challenge and winning the race in a time of 11hrs and 36mins – 1.5 hrs faster than expected

Lead supervisor Wg Cdr Jones (herself a veteran of two Channel relays) said: "The win shows what RAF sport is about; pushing limits and representing the Service with pride."

The team of Flt Lt Dodwell (OWS Team Manager and RAFSA100 Cross Channel Lead), Flt Lt Adams, Flt Lt Armitage, Off Cdt Langdown and Cpl Wright took on what is known as the

'Everest' of open water swimming.

After months of preparation, both teams met at Shorncliffe Camp in Folkestone for the final build-up.

One RAF team member said: "The practice night swim really helped prepare us for the reality of what we could face – it's an experience none of us will forget."

The main event saw the teams race 24-28 miles across the English Channel in an event conducted unassisted and without wetsuits, requiring swimmers to navigate one of the world's busiest shipping lanes while contending with strong tidal currents, high waves, seaweed and jellyfish stings.

A 12-hour delay tested nerves in the build-up and moved the race from an overnight event to the bright sunshine of the early morning, at 0730 from Shakespeare Beach. Leading from the start, the five-strong RAF team steadily built up a sizeable lead.

Having each swum two one-hour stints, the RAF's lead

Not Bard!

Swimmers conquer France AND beat the Germans... from Shakespeare Beach



SHAKESPEARE BEACH: Starting point for cross-Channel swimmers

swimmer, Dodwell, entered the water for her final shift, becoming the only swimmer to complete 180 minutes in the water, before being replaced by Langdown.

The German team were less fortunate, as they turned for Cap Griz Nez on the French coast, the currents forced them to endure a further 13km, and two hours more swimming.

Now the association's centenary year moves on to the Inter-Services, hosted by the RAF at Aldershot, followed by a RAFSA100 Water Polo tournament and diving Championships in September and the Swim Champs in November.

● Follow RAF Swimming on Instagram @rafswimassociation.



EN-SIGN OF THE TIMES: RAF swimmers fly the flag for the Service on beach

BMX

National glory for Haywood as Cardiff hosts for first time



A GRAND VET: Sgt Haywood leads the way at Cardiff

PHOTO: BMX WIDOW

SGT MATT Haywood got to the top of the Grand Vets pile in rounds 7 and 8 of the British Cycling BMX National Series in Cardiff.

The National BMX Centre Wales held the national series for the first time and the aviator claimed his first National win.

Haywood's podium glory came on the second day of action, having entered the rounds looking for some vital points to push him up the standings in the Grand Vets class.

The first day's action saw 21 riders in class, with three motos, a semi-final and finals places up for grabs.

The aviator started with a fourth in Moto 1, improving to second in Moto 2 and first in Moto 3, which saw him in gate two for the semi-final, where he took second place.

Electing to take gate 2 again for the final, the RAF man had a good start, but some contact saw him drop to the back, before regaining third place

on the exit of the first turn.

Pushing hard down the second straight, he got into position to challenge for second place into turn two and held it to the finish line.

The following day saw the aviator take third in Moto 2 and first in the next two.

Sunday was to be another tough day in the Grand Vets category, Matt starting out with a third in Moto 1 but this time taking first place in Moto 2 and 3.

Out of gate two again in the semi-final Haywood got a flying start and pushed hard, taking first place down the first straight.

The aviator preserved his lead to the finish, taking gate one for the final.

Needing a good start to keep ahead into turn one, Haywood flew out of the blocks, taking first going into turn one. He pushed hard throughout and crossed the line in first place, sealing his first-ever National race win.

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

TRIATHLON



GET ON YOUR BIKE: Like Hill did for the recent West Cheshire 50-Mile Time Trial

Try triathlon, says ironman FS Scott Hill

RAF TRIATHLON legend FS Scott Hill produced a first and second place in two summer events and hopes he will inspire others to take up his beloved sport.

He was out of the blocks quickly in the Nottingham Outlaw Half Triathlon, coming first in his age group after a gruelling 1,900m swim, 56-mile bike ride and half-marathon run.

He then hit the pedals for the West Cheshire 50-Mile Time Trial, coming second overall in one hour and 51 minutes.

Hill said: "I was proud to represent the RAF at the Outlaw Half Distance Ironman, finishing in 4:16 and taking first in my age group."

"It was not a perfect race, but there were signs of progress after dealing with a few niggles since last year."

"The hard work, consistency and balance are all starting to come together. There's still a lot more to come this year, and I'm

excited for what's ahead."

And of his return to the TT format, Hill said: "Back racing at the West Cheshire 50-Mile TT, it felt great to pin a number on and have a proper blast on the bike again."

"It was a tough day out with some seriously testing winds, despite the dry conditions, but that's all part of time trialling."

"I was happy to come away with second overall and first veteran."

Hill, who also trains others, added: "It's always good to step away from the coaching side occasionally and put yourself on the start line. Racing reminds you exactly what athletes go through and why we do it in the first place."

"Hopefully, the journey inspires others to chase their own goals while keeping perspective and enjoying the process."

Follow FS Hill on Instagram @ironhill83.



OUTLAW EVENT: Age group winner

SHOOTING

Hotshot Webb snares 3rd title

Nathan in RAF Champ hat-trick

Daniel Abrahams

CPL NATHANIEL Webb spun his way to a third prestigious King's Medal for Champion Shot of the Air Forces at Bisley during a bumper week of shooting action.

Cpl Webb, who also took the crown in 2022 and 2024, battled out a close-run competition with WO Alex Lilley and Sgt Kenroy Mitchell, both previous winners, this time coming second and third respectively.

The week also featured Chief of the Air Staff and President of the Royal Air Force Small Arms Association, Air Chief Marshal Sir Harv Smyth, competing with more than 40 Air Officers, Commanders and Station Warrant Officers in a Close Quarter Battle match.

CAS said: "Regardless of profession in the RAF, shooting remains a core skill for all and is an important element of our Transition to Conflict training."

"I was pleasantly surprised to learn that we have some extremely good shots amongst the team – only to be outdone by their competitiveness."

He added: "Well done to Air Cdre Phil Marr, Gp Capt Andy Colley and WO Sim Rezazadeh-Wilson – the winners. And thanks to everyone else for making the time to attend. Lastly, a massive thank you to the RAF Shooting team for organising the event, especially Sqn Ldr Ady Waters."

King's medal participants are required to shoot from distances of 25m to 500m with the standard Service rifle, and from 10m to 25m with the general Service pistol.

Competing in the RAF Operational Shooting Competition, the competition is



I'M IN THE CHAIR: Cpl Nat Webb is in the mood to celebrate as he is carried off after his victory. Left, the aviator on the range Photos: Conrad Steele-Benny

shot over eight stages, consisting of four or five shoots of 10 rounds.

Since 2023, The King has personally presented the medal to the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force winners at Windsor Castle. Cpl Webb also used the opportunity of his previous

Old Skool star Dean is leading the pack

See p23



IF LIFE FEELS HEAVY, WE'RE HERE.

Taking the first step to ask for help isn't easy – but you don't have to face things alone.

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**HELP for
HEROES**



Win horror title
on Blu-ray ● p3

R'n'R



In the spotlight – Lucy Beaumont goes solo

● See
pages
4-5

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

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

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



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**COMBAT
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Exhibitions

Ancient Landscape, Modern Times

The Holburne Museum, Bath, Oct 3 to January 10, 2027

The chalklands that provided a backdrop for wartime Britain



WAR ARTIST: Eric Ravilious went missing on a recon flight ©Phyllis Dodd

AS A site of ancient hill carvings, expansive vistas and distinctive white cliffs, the chalklands of southern England became the focus of a number of 20th-century artists, writers and thinkers.

This autumn the Holburne Museum in Bath presents *Ancient Landscape, Modern Times* (October 3 – January 10, 2027), an exhibition bringing together works by official war artist Eric Ravilious, his wife Tizah Garwood, Paul Nash, also a war artist, his brother John Nash, William Nicholson, Peggy Angus and other British artists from the 1910s to the 1940s.

The exhibition has been developed by writer and curator James Russell, widely recognised as the leading authority on Ravilious and his circle. During World War II Ravilious was invited to RAF Kaldadarnes in Iceland but in September 1942 his aircraft went missing on a reconnaissance flight. His body was never recovered.

A spokesperson for the exhibition said: "Through paintings, drawings, prints and archival material, the exhibition reveals how the stark, rolling forms of the South Downs and related chalk landscapes inspired a generation of artists seeking to reinvent landscape painting for the modern age, amidst growing political tensions and as Europe moved towards



ERIC RAVILIOUS: *The Westbury Horse*, 1939. On long loan to the Towner Collection. Image, Towner Eastbourne

global conflict.

"*Ancient Landscape, Modern Times* explores both the aesthetic and historical contexts of the landscapes of the South Downs and chalk landscapes of Wiltshire, Dorset and the Chilterns, examining how artists responded to their open horizons, sweeping contours and ancient monuments."

The spokesperson added: "Ravilious's celebrated depictions of chalk hill figures and ancient monuments as seen in *The Westbury Horse* (1939), draw on aerial viewpoints and modern graphic design as much as landscape tradition."

"The chalk downs provided a place for memorial and recovery following the First World War. Soon after, the rise of fascism in Europe provided a backdrop for a new engagement with ancient English landscapes, and with the arrival of the Second World War, artists observed its intrusion into

those places and reinforced the role of the chalk hills and cliffs of southern England as both strategic frontiers and potent national symbols.

"In watercolours such as *Coastal Defences* (1940), *Firing a 9.2 Gun* (1941) and *Bombing the Channel Ports* (1941), Ravilious fused the enduring forms of the landscape with the machinery of modern warfare whilst Paul Nash captured the uncanny intrusion of crashed German aircraft."

Chris Stephens, director of the Holburne, said: "I am so excited by *Ancient Landscape, Modern Times* which will bring together some of the most beautiful and compelling images of modern British art and consider them within the very particular contexts of the times in which they were made, a period of modernisation and of political drama."

● Go to: holburne.org for more information.



Competition

Pitfall (18)

Out now on Blu-ray, DVD and digital platforms

AGROUP of friends take a much-needed hike, inadvertently choosing a route booby-trapped by a crazed psychopath in this small and scrappy horror film by James Kondelik.

The pitfall – a concealed, deep pit with wooden spikes at the bottom – is, of course, one of the traps that awaits our unsuspecting travellers, whether it was intended for hunting animals, or purposes more nefarious.

The oblivious group consists of brother and sister Scott (Marshall Williams) and Ashley (Alexandra Essoe) who are trying to reconnect since a shared trauma that tore them apart, their partners, and tag-along Lars (Richard Harmon), who wasn't prepared for a walk, let alone what the woods have in store for him on this trip.

It is a simple premise on the surface, and perhaps this is the reason why efforts are made to add complexity, getting a little confused in the process. And so, after a lightning-fast origin story for the hooded bogeyman in the woods (played by

UFC legend Randy Couture), we learn the backstory to the siblings, their current relationships, and about some random girls who are being hunted in the woods. All of these stories are shuffled together, out of time, which not only detracts from the tension of the central storyline, but makes it hard to follow.

Despite being set in the present day, *Pitfall* constantly finds convenient ways to strip the characters of their phones, leaving them instead with dictaphones and video cameras, so that they can still voice their feelings out loud.

The film is at its best when it gets up close with inventive kills and practical gore. It suffers when getting lost in meandering drama, baffling flashbacks and relying on shoddy digital effects set to an overbearing score.

Pitfall works best as a no-frills slasher, but its attempts at deeper drama only bury the fun.

Two roundels out of five

Review by Sam Cooney



Fall in for gory slasher movie

Win!

WE HAVE copies of *Pitfall* on Blu-ray up for grabs. For your chance to win one, tell us:

Who plays the hooded bogeyman in the woods in *Pitfall*?

Email your answer, marked *Pitfall* Blu-ray 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 August 7. Please note: entrants must be over 18.



Exhibition

Drawn on the Western Front
The National Army Museum, Chelsea



LIAISON OFFICER:
Artist Paul Sarrut, 1915
© The estate of Paul Sarrut

Frontline Indians in World War One

THE NATIONAL Army Museum in London is staging the first-ever UK exhibition dedicated to a French artist who depicted Indian soldiers during World War I.

Drawn on the Western Front: Paul Sarrut and the Indian Army is free and runs until February 27, 2027.

The exhibition features more than 50 original drawings and works on paper, many shown publicly for the first time in over a century, alongside uniforms, photographs, archives and medals.

A Museum spokesperson explained: "During the First World War, over one million Indian men volunteered to serve in the British Indian Army. In 1914 alone, more than 140,000 soldiers travelled over 4,500 miles from India to France to fight on the Western Front.

"French liaison officer and interpreter Paul Sarrut served alongside them. With sketchbook constantly in hand, he created immediate and deeply human observations of military life. At the centre of the exhibition is Sarrut's portrait of Sepoy Harnam Singh, whose image became famous in Britain during the war.

"The exhibition explores the remarkable multicultural nature of the Indian Army, in which soldiers from what is now India, Pakistan, Britain and beyond, served and fought together."

Highlights include the Victoria Crosses awarded to Frank de Pass, the first Jewish recipient, and Khudadad Khan, who was both the first Muslim and the first soldier from the Indian subcontinent to receive the award.

"Due to the fragility of the works on paper, many are unlikely to be shown again for many years," said the spokesperson.

Khan's VC is on loan from Lord Ashcroft who said: "The courage that this soldier displayed at the



SEPOY HARNAM SINGH: 34th Sikh Pioneers (Turkhan Sikh), 7 October 1914, pencil drawing by Paul Sarrut

Battle of Ypres during the first year of the First World War was quite incredible. His gallantry deserves to be championed far and wide. It is also important to recognise that many loyal and brave Muslims have risked, and sometimes given, their lives for Britain, its allies and for wider freedoms."

Justin Maciejewski, the Museum's Director, said: "The Indian Corps played a vital part in the opening months of the First World War, and the soldiers depicted by Paul Sarrut illustrate their service and lives in a unique way."

Anna Lavelle, the exhibition's lead curator, added: "What makes Sarrut's work so compelling is its immediacy. He was living among the soldiers he drew and capturing moments as they happened: resting, reading, waiting, recovering. The sketches feel deeply personal and unguarded. They reveal aspects of military life that are often absent from official wartime imagery and help us connect emotionally with people living through extraordinary circumstances more than a century ago."

● **Go to:** nam.ac.uk for further details.



Comedy

Lucy Beaumont
UK tour

Bad at quizzes comedy

LUCY BEAUMONT is heading out on tour this autumn with a new stand-up show, *Bad At Quiz Shows*, *Good with Weirdos* – an evening packed with her unique brand of chaotic brilliance that has made her one of the UK's most beloved comedians.

Expect tales of everyday disasters, *Celebrity Traitors*, creating cow-udder clothing on *The Great British Sewing Bee* and navigating life in her own distinctively wayward style.

Lucy has previously also appeared on shows including *Would I Lie to You?* *The Great British Bake-Off*, *Meet the Richardsons* and *Taskmaster* and this year made her professional stage acting debut in *Road* at the Royal Exchange in Manchester.

Her new show is called *Bad At Quiz Shows*, *Good with Weirdos*. So why is she bad at quiz shows?

The Wheel

She explained: "On *Michael McIntyre's The Wheel* the first time I was on I lost someone £98,000. And then the second time I think it was £79,000. The question was 'what do you call a group of foxes?' It's not something you can just stab at, is it? He'd survived cancer, this poor lad, and then couldn't survive a question about foxes with me."

Celebrity Mastermind didn't go too well either.

"They said 'do it about someone that you want to know about,' she remembered. "I wouldn't be doing stand-up if I hadn't watched Les Dawson years ago, so I chose him. They gave me a book about him and said 'read this, we'll only ask you questions from this book.' So I thought, well, it's best to do it the night before, and then it'll all be in my head. But I fell asleep on page three. And everything they asked me was after page three."

Was she glad she did *Celebrity Traitors*?

"It was surreal. I coped with it differently to others. Everyone else got a social media team, I went into hiding when it was on. I went up a tree to get something down and someone saw me and

The wacky world of Hull's Lucy Beaumont



CELEBRITY TRAITORS: Lucy with fellow contestant and Faithful Celia Imrie BBC/Studio Lambert/Euan Cherry

I thought I had to pretend I was still in the castle. It was just a mad, mad time. There's always some sort of escapade I get myself into. People want to know about *Traitors* so I'll be talking about that."

This is the Hull comic's second tour and much bigger than her debut. How will it differ?

Lucy explained: "I think mostly I'm just more confident. I would never have said this even a year ago, but I want to be the best comic. I think I've found out what sort of comic I am and what people want to hear. When I started people wondered if I was playing a character. I just went onstage with a handbag and hoped for the best. But now I feel like I'm me, there's no act."

Has the show got a theme?

ADHD

"It's really about myself," she said: "I think you probably get a big snapshot of how my mind works. I honestly didn't know I was odd. People are like, 'how can she be so ditzy and yet also bright?' But that's how ADHD

FUNNY BONES:
Lucy Beaumont
PHOTO: DEBBIE ELLIS, and front page

works. You can be both. It's not deep or serious though, I just want people to have a laugh."

Some of her stories are so crazy people think she's making them up. Like the one about kids sticking a Wagon Wheel on her forehead while she was asleep on a train...

"I don't need to make anything up," she stressed. "I can just use my real life. The comedy finds me. I send voice messages to friends that are routines. At the moment I like sending them to Denise Van Outen, because she messages back and just laughs."

Beaumont says she comes from a funny family: "All my family is funny. We've all been brought up that you don't open your mouth unless you've

Lucy
is let
loose

Compiled by Executive Features Editor Tracey Allen

Dark
comic
thriller



Theatre
The Other Side of Murder
UK tour

Hound's Divine in new play

RUFUS HOUND (*One Man, Two Guvnors*, *Wind in the Willows*) stars as TV medium Darius Divine alongside Susie Blake (*Victoria Wood*, *Coronation Street*) in Torben Betts' darkly comic new thriller *The Other Side of Murder*, on tour from September.

When celebrated TV medium Darius Divine, host of hit light-entertainment show *The Other Side*, plans a cosy family dinner, he expects awkward small talk. He doesn't expect his pregnant lover, his Gilbert and Sullivan obsessed mother-in-law, or a night of ghostly visitations and explosive revelations.

As dinner burns and tensions rise, the line between performance and reality begins to shatter. Secrets surface. Jealousies ignite. And a final twist lands that no one will see coming.

Betts is the writer of hit plays *Murder at Midnight* and *Murder in the Dark*, which also starred Blake.

A co-production from award-winning producers Original Theatre in association with Theatr Clwyd, *The Other Side of Murder* is directed by Philip



MEDIUM: Rufus Hound is Darius Divine



SUSIE BLAKE: Star of TV and stage

Franks (*The Darling Buds of May*, *Heartbeat*) who previously directed *Murder at Midnight* and *Murder in the Dark*.

Betts' new play has been described as funny, shocking and deliciously unsettling...a wild theatrical ride that will have audiences laughing one minute and gasping the next.

Tour dates are: Theatr Clwyd, Mold (September 4-12); Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford (Sept 15-19); New Theatre, Cardiff (Sept 22-26); Devonshire Park Theatre, Eastbourne (October 5-10); Gaiety Theatre, Dublin (Oct 13-17); Blackpool Grand Theatre (Oct 20-24); Churchill

Theatre, Bromley (November 2-7); Palace Theatre, Southend (Nov 9-14); Mayflower Studios, Southampton (Nov 16-21); Wycombe Swan, High Wycombe (January 18-23, 2027); Derby Theatre (Jan 26-30); Malvern Theatres (February 2-6); Royal & Derngate, Northampton (Feb 8-13); Darlington Hippodrome (Feb 16-20); Leeds Playhouse (Feb 23-27); Salisbury Playhouse (March 9-13) and Belgrade Theatre, Coventry (March 16-20). More venues are to be announced.

● **Go to:** murderplay.co.uk for more information and to book tickets.



Books
The Air War Through German Eyes
amberley-books.com

Win!

A different view of WWII

A NEW paperback edition of an important book about one of the most controversial campaigns of World War II is out now.

Described as a meticulous and evocative insight, *The Air War Through German Eyes: How the Luftwaffe Lost the Skies Over the Reich* by Jonathan Trigg (amberley-books.com) is based on primary documentation and the memories of the German combatants and civilians.

Starting with leaflet drops in 1940, the aerial offensive against the Nazis' homeland grew into a huge armada that pulverised much of Germany, seriously damaging its ability to make war and killing hundreds of thousands. By day, the Flying Fortresses of the Mighty Eighth US Airforce confronted the day fighters of Luftflotte Reich, and then it was the turn of Bomber Command's Lancasters to fight off the deadly predators of the Nachtjagd (night hunters).

The tactics and technology of Allied escort fighters evolved quickly though the war years, as they did for the defending German fighters. For the Allied airmen who fought this war the price was frighteningly high, for those who opposed them –

in the air and on the ground – it was even higher.

As the bombing increased, Nazi high command was forced to devote more and more resources to try to defeat the Allied campaign, just when those same resources were desperately needed elsewhere, both on the Russian Front and, after D-Day on June 6, 1944, on the new Western Front.

The book follows on from the author's titles *D-Day Through German Eyes*; *How the Wehrmacht Lost France* and *Barbarossa Through German Eyes*; *The Biggest Invasion in History*.

Jonathan Trigg served in the British Army, completing operational tours in Northern Ireland and Bosnia, afterwards acting as a military instructor to friendly governments in the Arabian Gulf.

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

What does Nachtjagd mean?

Email your answer, marked Jonathan Trigg 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 August 7.



got something funny to say. When my great-grandmother was on her deathbed, everyone gathered round and said 'Do you want to be buried or cremated?' And she said 'I don't know, surprise me.'

Politics

Lucy also said she wants to go into politics...

"I wouldn't be able to get into my fifties without having a go at it," she explained. "I just want to improve standards for children. The area I would like to look after is Blackpool North. I've seen child poverty that I can't shake off. Parks with just a metal swing, a slide and a spring

that goes up and down. I would vote Green if there was an election tomorrow, unless Andy Burnham takes over Labour."

She added: "I used to be the most nervous person. A promoter once said: 'I wanted to book you, and I just emailed a few people and said, do you have a number for that girl that shakes onstage?' It was me. My knees would be literally knocking together. But I don't feel like that now."

The tour starts on September 23 at Baths Hall, Scunthorpe and continues until July 18, 2027 at Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre.

● **Go to:** lucybeaumont.co.uk for tour dates and ticket details.

Interview by Bruce Dessau



Your Announcements

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

Death

HOOD David Mungall, passed away on March 5, aged 95. Born in Glasgow on May 24, 1930. Deferred studies at the Glasgow School of Art to sign up for National Service and joined the RAF in January 1949. Best all-round recruit of his entry, No.22 Flight 3 Wing at RAF Bridgnorth. Trained as an equipment assistant and was posted out to Singapore, where he spent the rest of his service. On return to Glasgow he entered the world of work with a career in insurance with the Liverpool Victoria Friendly Society. Married his soulmate Margaret, now departed, and leaves a legacy of 7 children, 19 grandchildren and 27 great-grandchildren. And he still had time to indulge his other great passion in life, on the golf course! Rest in peace, Pops.



In Memoriam

BLACKLEDGE Kath (née Wigg). DSA 76-83. Served at Catterick (lived at Leeming), West Drayton, Odiham and St Athan. With detachments to Aldergrove and Northolt. Kath passed away July 21, 2025 aged 67. Greatly missed by husband Craig (Ernie), children Zoé and Lee and grandchildren Neve, Frazer and Adam. Is it really a year?



Seeking

SEARCHING for the whereabouts of former armourer Cpl Alan Ronald Gray, who started his career as an RAF apprentice and member of the 81st Entry at RAF Halton. He and I served together at RAF Leuchars, Fife. Upon leaving the RAF he forged a career as a civilian weapons engineer in a number of Royal Naval Armament Depots around the United Kingdom. Any information to Alan Mudge, tel: 01760 337514 or: bombhead055@gmail.com

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.

Reunions

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 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. Please see: rafaarmourers.co.uk or please email the committee: 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.

Graduates are ready to fly



GRADUATES: (From left) Sgts Tom Griffith, Scott Callaghan, Austin Holmes and Owen Trombetta with Sqn Ldr Steve Brown, Flight Commander 45 Sqn (centre)

MEMBERS OF the RAF Air Loadmaster Association (ALMA) were invited to attend No3 Flying Training School's graduation ceremony at RAF Cranwell recently to meet the latest WSO (Loadmaster) Fixed Wing graduates.

The graduates now go to their OCU's (A400 & C-17) where they will start their on-type training, to include ground and flying

training for both. For the C-17 that will include several months of training in Australia later this year.

Les Weston, from the Association, said: "ALMA were privileged to have this opportunity to tell the graduates about the Association's values and aims, which it hopes to share with new cadre members right from the start of their careers."



Mosquito model for sale

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

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

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

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

Experts offer free workshop

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

Stronger Relationships, Stronger Service Lives will cover emotional

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

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

● Goto: christinepatersondeacon.com for more information



How to use our service

There is no charge for conventionally-worded **birth, engagement, marriage, anniversary, death, in memoriam seeking** and **reunion** notices. For commercial small ads contact Edwin Rodrigues on: 07482 571535.

We cannot, under any circumstances, take announcements over the telephone. They can be sent by email to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or by post to: **Announcements, RAF News, Room 68, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE.**

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THANK YOU:
ACM Johns
(left) with Air
Cdre Pitchfork

Historical Society awards

AT ITS Annual General Meeting at the RAF Club last month, two important presentations were made by the President of the RAF Historical Society, ACM Sir Richard Johns.

Sir Richard presented the Two Air Forces Award for 2025 to Gp Capt Sam Wallington, Principal Staff Officer to Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe, for his essay *Much More Than an Act of Faith: the Railway Research Service in the Second World War*. The essay will be printed in a future Society journal.

ACM Johns also presented the Air League Gold Medal and a bottle of Scotch whisky to Air Cdre Graham Pitchfork (Ret'd) in a farewell and thank you for his long, highly-valued and exceptional contributions to the Society and history of the Service.

Sir Richard said Air Cdre Pitchfork, the Society's Vice-Chairman for the past 20 years and a long-serving member of its committee, had been a driving force in many areas, providing practical and deeply knowledgeable advice.

New nursery opens for military kids

RAFAKIDZ KINLOSS celebrated its official opening with a visit from the Commander of the 51st Infantry Brigade and Headquarters Scotland, Brigadier Jody Davies.

Brig Davies cut the ribbon and declared the nursery officially open before meeting RAFAKidz staff and children.

He was then given a tour of the nursery with deputy manager Pauline Ferrier and CEO of RAFAKidz and Secretary General of the RAF Association, Nick Bunting.

Brig Davies said: "We are delighted to welcome RAFAKidz to Kinloss and benefit from their extensive experience in supporting military children and families. The nursery has been an important part of the Kinloss community since RAF Kinloss was situated here."

Mr Bunting said: "By providing serving families with trusted, high-quality childcare, RAFAKidz helps to support retention and contributes to operational effectiveness across the military."

"It was a real privilege to



SUPPORT: Brig Davies meets children and staff at RAFAKidz Kinloss

welcome Brigadier Davies to the nursery to showcase the amazing work of our staff and the impact that work has here in the community."

RAFAKidz Kinloss offers childcare options for children aged six months to five years, serving military personnel, families and the local community. It is the first RAFAKidz nursery to open in Scotland, joining 21

existing settings across England and Wales.

● The RAFAKidz team have made the shortlist for the Nursery World Awards, an annual event that celebrates and recognises the work of individuals and organisations across the UK's early years sector.

The team will find out if they have won at an awards ceremony in September.





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The official voice of the Royal Air Force



Prize Crossword
No. 414

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

- Across
7. Graduate takes rightful son of Noah to station (6)
8. See 14 Down
10. Food from Los Angeles may slump in Maine, ultimately (7)
11. Typhoon system first activated, preventing Kremlin war strategy (5)
12. A right negative flower (4)
13. Icy dwelling-place? (5)
17. Note turns one musical instrument into another (5)
18. After five years of this TV detective (4)
22. Sounds like Tom is RAF personnel (5)
23. Fashionable chap is barbaric (7)
24. Shopping area has alien sports stick (6)
25. Protectors see doctors embrace one (6)

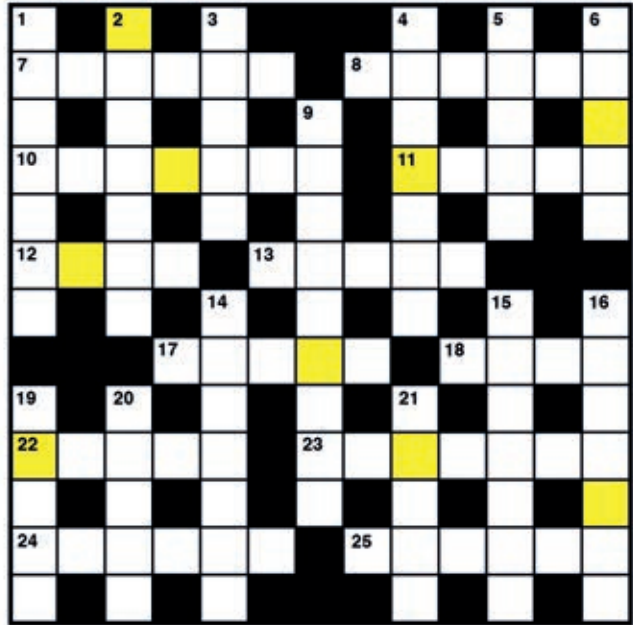
- Down
1. Mercury meets metal in dentistry (7)
2. Give it to me now (7)
3. Goods on aircraft include motor lead (5)
4. Spanish province has embargo on this country (7)
5. US General outside Kansas plants (5)
6. 100 race towards teen idol (5)
9. RAF aircraft has tapered piece at rear (9)
14. And 8 Across. Resettle groom disturbed by RAF jet (7,6)
15. During melee, Mingus reaches station (7)
16. Crazy pop group? (7)
19. Rascal makes racket on piano (5)
20. Chief Executive Officer embraces pupils' instrument (5)
21. Piercing southern instrument (5)

Name:

Address:

RAF equipment:Crossword No. 414

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 August 7, 2026.



Prize Crossword No. 413 solution

Across – 6. Utrecht 7. Royal 9. Blitz 10. Chapati 12. Arch-enemies 14. George Dowty 18. Skelter 19. Braid 21. Inane 22. Missile

Down – 1. Style 2. Helter 3. The 4. Pom-pom 5. Fast Jet 8. Chinook 11. Cheered 13. Sea King 15. Relent 16. Thrust 17. Viola 20. Sir

RAF aircraft – Canberra

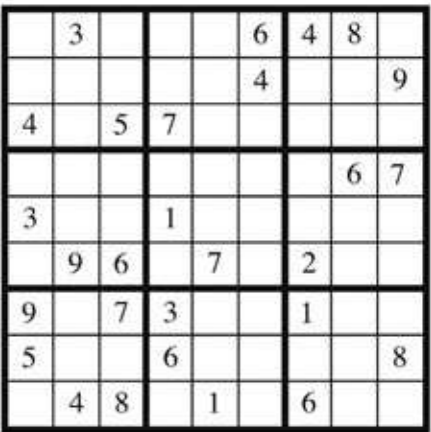
Prize Crossword No. 412 winner is: Robert Manley, Exeter.



Prize Su Doku
No. 424

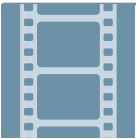
Fill in all the squares in the grid so that each row, each column and each 3x3 square contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

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 August 7, 2026. The winner of Su Doku No: 421 is: A Clarkson, Lincoln.



Solution to Su Doku No. 423

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



Film review
For the Record: An Incomplete History of Music

Streaming now, cosmicshambles.com and youtube.com

The key to music

CHARLOTTE RITCHIE presents a sprawling YouTube documentary series that aims to break down music to its essence, looking at the science of sound and its rippled impact through life on earth.

Produced by The Cosmic Shambles Network, known for their blend of science and entertainment, of course the first episode of *For the Record* goes way back to the very beginning – the Big Bang. Naturally, each of the nine episodes is filled with interviews with musicians but also professors and scientists, from Charlotte Church to astronaut Chris Hadfield.

In the second episode *Numbers Fall*, things get pretty mathematical as a series of experts look at scales and time signatures, and why they are the way they are.

There is a great sequence featuring British musician and composer Nitin Sawhney talking about the time cycles of Indian



HIGH NOTE: Presenter Charlotte Ritchie holds all the segments together

classic music, in which you learn the counting technique that is essential to the style before it being demonstrated by musician Sanju Sahai on tabla drums.

Whilst there is some live performing and archive clips of performances, there is also a necessary deluge of graphs and graphics to help parse the information and make it stick.

It's pretty helpful but dry nonetheless. The tone of the show feels like edutainment, like your old physics teacher pulling out a ukulele, but maybe more self-conscious.

The glue holding the segments

together is Ritchie, who has the job of both speaking broadly and wondrously about music, all music, with a scattering of puns. It lands somewhere between *The One Show* and Alan Partridge's parody of *The One Show*.

There are good jokes in here, especially the music-specific gags, although the constant sound cues make it feel just a bit raff.

For the Record is packed with illuminating information, covering a huge swathe of human knowledge in great detail.

3 roundels out of 5
Review by Sam Cooney

Jack Ashton's Havana good time in new role

CLIVE FRANCIS' adaptation of Graham Greene's spy comedy *Our Man in Havana* is now on tour. This new twist on the celebrated classic will play venues including Oxford Playhouse (July 28-August 1) and Cheltenham's Everyman (Aug 18-22) before finishing at the Cambridge Arts Theatre (September 1-5).

Based on Greene's novel, the production follows British vacuum-cleaner salesman James Wormold, who is accidentally recruited as an MI6 spy. In pre-revolutionary Cuba, he invents a network of fictional agents and reports with hilarious consequences.

Wormold is played bystage and screen actor Jack Ashton. Known for his roles in *Call the Midwife* and *Lockerie*, he recently starred in Anne-Marie Casey's adaptation of *Little Women*.

Ashton (below) said: "I love period stuff and Cuba in the 1950s is a pretty cool place to be. Wormold is naive and he gets sucked into its darker web, which is interesting to play as an actor because he starts to play the game and he realises he's actually quite good at it."



ACCIDENTAL SPY: Ashton as Wormold

Joining him on stage are Bob Barrett (*Holby City*, *Father Brown*), Leon Ockenden (*Waterloo Road*, *Mr Selfridge*) and Jodie Steele (*Heathers the Musical*, *Six*). Together they play more than 30 characters to bring 1950s Havana vividly to life.

Our Man in Havana is produced by Theatre Royal Windsor (*The Marquise*) and adapted for the stage by Clive Francis, who last appeared at The Playhouse in Somerset Maugham's *The Circle* in 2024 alongside Jane Asher and Nicholas Le Prevost.

Go to: kenwright.com for full tour details. To book tickets, contact the Box Office on: 01865 305305 or visit: oxfordplayhouse.com.

