

The Forces' favourite paper

Night raiders target Europe
See page 19



Win!

Hidden gems of British Airways
See R'n'R page 5



Win!

ROYAL AIR FORCE

Friday, June 26, 2026
Edition No.1635

Only 99p

RAF NEWS

Wg Cdr who survived child abuse helping others battling trauma



See p5

Darts
First RAF champion

● See p23



Boxing
Bilbey Box Cup action

● See page 25



Football
Astra glory

● See p27



Channel raiders

UK seizes Putin's ship of shame funding his illegal war in Ukraine



Staff Reporter

ELITE MARINE Commandos fast-roped from a RAF Chinook as the UK seized a sanction-busting oil tanker fuelling Vladimir Putin's brutal war in Ukraine.

The Smyrtos is believed to be part of Russia's shadow fleet, shipping embargoed oil through the channel in violation of UK law.

Specially-trained National Crime Agency personnel joined the raid - the first of its kind conducted by British Forces.

● See p3 for full story

BiteSize

“The bravery and resilience shown by Falklands veterans is incredible,”



RAF Cpl in 250km charity fundraiser
See page 7



WALKING WITH THE WOUNDED
Supporting Those Who Served

“This is the music I grew up with and sang along to,”



Call the Midwife's Helen George feels nostalgic about her latest starring role, in High Society

See R'n'R pages 4-5



First RAF darts champ, Chf Tech Gareth Edwards

“This has to be one of the highlights of my RAF career,”

See page 23



ROYAL AIR FORCE RAF News

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UK drone centre opens

Staff Reporter

NEWLY APPOINTED Defence Secretary Dan Jarvis has opened Europe's biggest drone testing facility in Swindon.

UK Defence is stepping up drone development as uncrewed aerial devices continue to shape the battlefield.

Designed to get cutting-edge UAVs to the frontline faster, the Uncrewed Systems Centre based at the DroneTEX facility is part of a £400 million investment in drone technology.

Mr Jarvis said: “The character of warfare is changing, fast. From Ukraine to the Middle East, we see how uncrewed systems are rapidly evolving and reshaping conflict.

“Our new facility will ensure the UK embraces technologies that are redefining warfare.

“We will now be able to develop and field new tech in a matter of weeks – because in this new era, those who innovate fastest will win.”



UAV DEVELOPMENT: Defence Secretary Dan Jarvis at the Uncrewed Systems Centre in Swindon

This Week In History



1944
1.2 million in RAF

THE RAF reaches peak strength of 1,185,833, comprised of more than one million men and nearly 180,000 women.

1936
Altitude record

FLT LT M.J. Adam sets a new altitude record in a Bristol 138, climbing to 53,937 feet at Farnborough, wearing a specially designed high-altitude suit.



1995
Island inferno

84 SQN Wessex helicopters are called in to help fight the biggest wildfire in Cyprus for a century, delivering 80,000 gallons of water in 43 hours.

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

Bulletin



FAMILY FUN: RAF Museum

Museum tops poll

Tracey Allen

THE RAF Museum has been voted one of the world's top 10 tourist attractions in a travel industry poll.

The Tripadvisor vote follows awards for the London venue – which was named the capital's best exhibition space – and the Midlands site, which took top UK honours for a family day out.

Museum director Barry Smith said: "We are delighted that both Museum sites have been recognised among travellers' favourites this year.

"As one of the travel industry's most prestigious accolades, Travellers' Choice is particularly meaningful because it is based on the feedback of our visitors.

"Being ranked among the top 10 attractions worldwide is a tremendous achievement and reflects the commitment of our staff and volunteers to delivering memorable and inspiring experiences every day."

Marines seize Putin tanker



BOARDING PARTY: Chinook, Merlin and Wildcat aircraft took part in the seizure of the Smyrtos tanker. Inset above, Royal Marines conduct cabin-by-cabin search

Staff Reporter

BRITISH FORCES boarded a sanctioned shadow fleet oil tanker in the Channel in the latest blow to Russia's war economy.

In the first UK-led operation of its kind, the vessel Smyrtos was boarded by Royal Marine Commandos and officers from the National Crime Agency, despite Russia's best efforts to evade sanctions and continue fuelling its war with Ukraine.

Commandos fast-roped from a Chinook and Merlin helicopters during the six-hour operation, while a P-8 Poseidon maritime surveillance aircraft monitored the area over the Channel.

NCA officers arrested an Indian national on suspicion of sanctions offences under the Russia Regulations and he was taken into custody and 24 Georgian and Indian crew have been questioned.

The vessel is being held and

monitored off the south coast near Weymouth, Dorset, the MOD confirmed.

Video footage of the operation shows personnel boarding the vessel and conducting a cabin-by-cabin search.

The Smyrtos is one of an estimated 600 vessels sanctioned by the UK government. The shadow fleet is believed to be a vital source of income to the Russian war machine, carrying 75 per cent of sanctioned Russian oil supplies.

Defence secretary Dan Jarvis said: "Operations like this require skill, professionalism and courage. I pay tribute to our Armed Forces personnel and all those involved.

"Russia relies on its shadow fleet to fund its conflict in Ukraine and our interdiction delivers a blow to Putin's illegal war. This action sends a clear message to Russia that the UK will use the full range of legal tools available to enforce those sanctions and protect our security."

USA Red letter day

THE RED Arrows flew out to Iceland en route to the USA as the aerobatic team prepares to take part in the 250th anniversary of American Independence.

The three-day transit will also see the team stop in Greenland and Canada ahead of national celebrations to mark the date.

The RAF aerobatic aces will be joined by Royal Navy ships docked in New York and New Orleans as a month of celebrations kick off, performing at 13 events across seven states.

The highlight of the tour will be taking part in an international flypast over New



York which will be televised to an international audience of millions.

Arrows chief Wg Cdr Sasha Nash said: "This tour is a fantastic opportunity to display the best of British at significant events and occasions marking the 250th anniversary alongside friends, allies and international counterparts."

AVM lands Space Command

Staff Reporter

AIR VICE-MARSHAL Jamie Thompson has taken charge of UK Defence Space Command, taking over from Maj General Paul Tedman.

Speaking after the handover he said: "I am delighted to be joining such an exciting command at a time of unparalleled operational activity and capability growth. It is great to be back with friends and colleagues I have worked with for over two decades."

A former Weapons Technician, he commissioned in 2003 as an Engineering Officer and has worked in cyber, air-land integration and intelligence operations.



STARRING ROLE: AVM Thompson (right) takes over from Maj Tedman, who has retired



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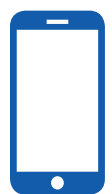
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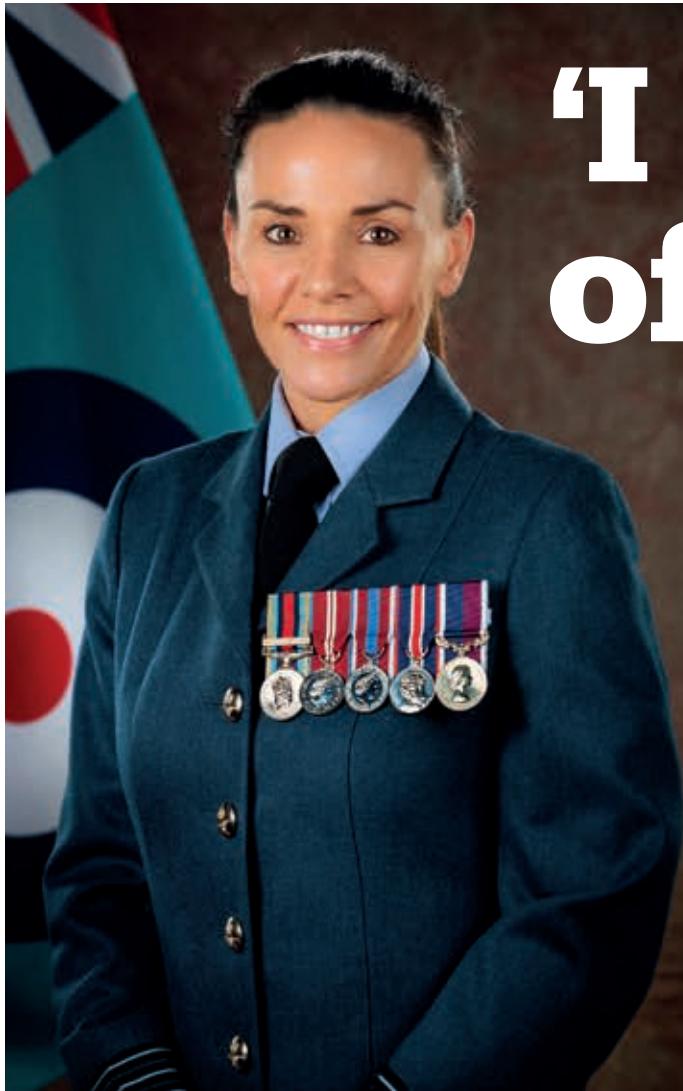


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'I survived years of child abuse – now I want to inspire others to overcome adversity...'



Tracey Allen

A WING Commander who endured appalling abuse as a child and wrote a bestselling book about overcoming the horror of her upbringing is now championing women in leadership.

Jacqui Wilkinson, author of *Turning The Tables On Trauma*, is retiring from the RAF at the end of June to work full-time on the conscious leadership code she designed and to develop a bespoke defence course so that people can become trauma-informed leaders.

The Brize Norton-based logistics specialist said she was overwhelmed by the positive feedback she received from readers of her book, which describes how she survived being sexually abused by her father and neglected by her alcoholic, depressed mother, but fought back to live a successful and fulfilling life.

She is now married to an Army officer and the couple have two young children.

Jacqui, 47, who joined the RAF in 2003, is also a certified hypnotherapist, award-winning speaker, leadership coach and fitness instructor, as well as a mentor to survivors of child sexual abuse.

She sits on the UK Defence Mental Health and Wellbeing Committee, championing trauma-informed leadership and mental fitness.

She said: "I did so much analysis and deep research on what helped me to heal; I chose the right things unconsciously and I wanted to put that into a program for women leaders so they can really empower themselves.

"The World Health Organisation stated that 70 per cent of people will experience a traumatic event in their lives – this means trauma is walking into the workplace every day.

"We need to recognise that – if it isn't

handled or managed that can lead to maladapted coping strategies."

For Jacqui, that meant turning herself into a 'super achiever' because, she said: "My inner self-worth was so badly damaged".

From being kicked out of the family home, aged 17, by her mother, and sleeping on her sister's floor, Jacqui put herself through university and now has four postgraduate degrees, including an MSc with distinction.

She is well-aware that many adults who have suffered child sexual abuse want to keep that secret, as she did initially.

"So many are afflicted by this and it breaks my heart that people really struggle behind closed doors.

"My advice is that the shame and the guilt you might feel is not yours and the moment you start to share is the moment you start to let it go. Share it with someone you feel safe with.

"I vowed no one in the RAF would know about the abuse I had suffered because military personnel are strong and resilient and if anyone saw the cracks they would write me off.

"When I joined 20 years ago, mental health wasn't a mainstream topic like it is today. We hadn't yet seen the aftermath of years of conflict in Afghanistan and the consequential impact of PTSD.

"I believed there was a silent stigma attached to mental health, a sign of weakness, not fitting for a future leader to have experienced."

She added: "Being in the RAF has given me safety and security as well as reliability and routine, which I was not always afforded in my childhood.

"By joining the Service, it helped me to raise my standards, which in turn helped me turn the tables on my trauma."

Jacqui said when her book was



TACKLING TRAUMA: Wg Cdr Jacqui Wilkinson with her husband and two children

published she had 'amazing support' from colleagues and line managers.

"It blew my mind. I asked the RAF's permission to publish the book and they said it was phenomenal. So many people who read it described it as really powerful and have thanked me for writing it."

All the profits from the sale of Jacqui's book go to Axis Counselling, the organisation that first helped her when she was a teenager.


She added: "I'm retiring early because I want to help people. I'm currently running a course for 12 women, half of whom are military.

"I'm building a community to help women feel empowered and see their true value.

"I also want to create a course specifically for Defence, so personnel can become trauma-informed leaders and help their own people."

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Bulletin



STAR PERFORMER: Harry Hitch marks his big day at the Star and Garter

Harry's hurrah

VETERAN ENGINEER Harry Hitch marked his 100th birthday with a double celebration.

The great-great grandfather was joined at the Star and Garter care home where he lives by his family before enjoying another celebration the following day with residents and neighbours.

Harry, who served from 1946, continued his love of aviation by designing aircraft parts before joining the family's frozen food industry after retiring.

Daughter Brenda said: "I'd like to thank the staff, who helped make it such a special and memorable day for him and for his family."



Gurkha tribute

Susie Wood

St Mawgan

ST MAWGAN celebrated the history of the Royal Gurkha Rifles with a Nepal-themed dining in night.

The Cornish station paid tribute to the legacy of the Army's Nepal recruits with a Tri-Service celebration.

The event - organised by Colour Sgt Naresh Rai of the Royal Gurkha Rifles, who is currently serving with the Defence Survive, Evade, Resist, Extract Training Organisation - showcased Nepalese culture and cuisine.

Trek for Falklands vets

Staff Reporter

Brize Norton

AIR FORCE cop Cpl Louis Blanshard is hitting the road to honour Falklands veterans with a 250km charity challenge.

The Brize-based fundraiser will be covering the distance - equivalent to six marathons - in a month as the UK marks the 44th anniversary of the conflict in the South Atlantic.

He launched the bid to support military charity Walking With The Wounded after completing a tour at Mount Pleasant with Brize Norton's Air Mobility Police Flight.

Louis said: "It's going to be physically and mentally demanding, but it is nothing compared to the sacrifices made by those we are remembering."

"After being deployed to the Falklands and experiencing the adverse conditions there, the magnitude of bravery and resilience showed is unimaginable and can't be put into words."

"I wanted to do something that not only honours their legacy but also supports today's veterans as they transition to life beyond service."



CHARITY BEAT: Cpl Blanshard will be honouring Falklands veterans

F1 aces keep pilots on pole

Track stars give crews 'Combat Edge'



RUSSELL: Typhoon trip

HAMILTON: Reds ride

Staff Reporter

TRAINING CHIEFS have brought in F1 race aces and top British sports talent to help give UK Top Guns the edge in the combat zone.

Team experts from Aston Martin have been recruited to help pilots stay focused and operate at peak performance when they're under extreme pressure.

It's the latest tie-up between elite RAF pilots and Grand Prix track stars, who both operate complex extreme machines at high velocity.

The MOD has worked with F1 teams McLaren and Williams

to develop battlefield kit, while British racing legends Lewis Hamilton and George Russell have both teamed up with the Air Force, flying with the Red Arrows and Typhoon Force.

The Combat Edge programme focuses on the psychological demands of operations and optimum decision-making in high-stress situation.

Training experts from Sports UK are also giving the fighter crews tips on delivering elite level performance when it counts.

Air Cdre Rob Caine said: "Our fast jet pilots represents a node in a network, while the F1 driver is part of a team but they are

fundamentally involved in a solo endeavour."

Top level race drivers experience similar g-forces and research shows raised heart rates of more than 145 bpm have a profound effect on decision-making.

Air Cdre Caine added: "As the battlespace grows increasingly complex and contested, the ability to make good enough decisions at speed is often the differentiator."

"This is especially true of fourth and fifth-generation fighters, which bring with them layers of interconnected systems and capabilities.

"The Combat Edge programme is designed to maximise the pilot's capability, so they can get the maximum from the aircraft. If we can ensure our pilots are making good enough decisions, the likelihood of achieving mission objectives greatly increases."

"It doesn't matter what training models, organisation charts or psychological theories you have, without exceptional people to deliver them, you don't have anything."

"We wouldn't be holding up our end of the deal if we didn't give our recruits the best instructors possible."

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SAR star who cheated death hits The Wall

Staff Reporter

A SEA King winchman who defied 45-foot waves in a dramatic rescue bid has told how he cheated death to pull a sailor from the raging seas as storms battered the coast.

Speaking to Air Crew graduates on the SERE survival course at RAF Cranwell as he added his name to the Wall of Gallantry, Sqn Ldr Jamie Eden-Hamilton described the mission that earned him the Air Force Cross as he briefed the Forces' latest air crews on how to beat the odds in adversity.

During the life and death struggle in the storm that capsized an RNLI lifeboat called to the scene, the RAF winchman plunged into the sea to retrieve the stricken casualty who slipped the harness as waves engulfed the pair.

He managed to hold onto the drowning man and pull him to the surface before being hauled on board the Sea King.

He was presented with the AFC by HM Queen Elizabeth for exhibiting 'exemplary gallantry during flying whilst not on active operations.'

SERE instructor Mark Fairhead said: "He spoke of the need for real resilience and advised students to be prepared for loss. He recalled passionately the selfless devotion and courage of the Search and Rescue and Medical extraction crews.

"He described the psychological and physiological impact complex PTSD can have. Saving the lives of others in peril was clearly his main motivator in the leading of his own."

Jamie joined up as an Air Loadmaster

in 1988 and served in the first and second Gulf wars and Northern Ireland before going on to supervise strike-force operations with the Joint Aviation Group in Afghanistan.

Mr Fairhead added: "Jamie is a big man, a huge character and a selfless operator. Candid in his recounting of his own battle with PTSD and humble in his delivery, his strength, humility, selfless courage and care for others shone through. He exudes the very essence of devotion to his people and unconquered spirit."



HIGH SEAS DRAMA: Sqn Ldr Jamie Eden-Hamilton adds his name to the Wall of Gallantry. Inset left, Sea King in action during a rescue mission

Forces pay deal beats inflation

Staff Reporter

ARMED FORCES personnel will receive an above-inflation pay rise of 3.6 per cent, netting an average increase of £1,650 a year, Defence chiefs say.

Starting salaries for non-commissioned ranks will increase by nearly £1,000 a year to £27,282, benefiting around 14,250 of the most junior personnel. Starting pay for junior officers will rise £1,250 to £35,926.

It is the third consecutive year that Armed Forces personnel have received an above-inflation pay rise, totalling a cumulative pay award of just over 14 per cent since July 2024.

The latest award will be backdated from April this year and brings the average military salary to £45,710.

Chief of the Defence Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton, said: "This pay award is an important part of how we recognise the important role and the valuable service the people of our Armed Forces play in keeping our country safe.

"Our people serve with great



PAY RECOGNITION: Chief of the Defence Staff Sir Richard Knighton

professionalism, dedication and courage.

"Pay, accommodation, family support and welfare are all part of the support that helps ensure that our people are ready for whatever we ask of them.

"We will continue to work to make sure that this meets the needs of our people."

Announcing the latest pay settlement, Defence chiefs revealed that the UK Forces headcount has risen by just over 1,500 this year, bringing the total strength across all three Services to 183,410.



Ukraine training boost

BRITISH SUPPORT for Ukraine's frontline fighters is to be expanded to include specialist training in combat medicine, logistics and engineering, the MOD has revealed.

The latest developments were unveiled this week as the UK-led Operation Interflex training programme enters its fifth year.

Initially designed to prepare combat troops for battle, it was expanded to include basic fast jet and helicopter pilot training. So far the UK has trained more than 63,000 soldiers and pilots, defence chiefs said.

Interflex will transition into a new, unified framework,

bringing all UK-led training for Ukraine, in the UK and overseas, under a single name.

In line with the changing requirements, the programme will move away from large-scale infantry training and towards specialist and advanced training designed to build long-term capability, a spokesman said.

Speaking ahead of his resignation, Defence Secretary John Healey said: "Now in the fifth year of Putin's brutal war, it is clear that Ukraine's training needs have evolved since 2022. It is therefore right that the UK's training offer evolves too.

"As Operation Interflex marks

its four-year anniversary, we are entering a new phase that builds on its success and agility to deliver long-term specialist skills such as pilot, medical and engineering training.

"In doing so, we are helping ensure Ukraine's Armed Forces are better equipped to meet future challenges independently and effectively.

"With eyes on the Middle East in recent months, Putin wants us to be distracted, but Ukrainians continue to fight with huge courage and nothing will distract us from continuing to stand with them for as long as it takes to secure peace."

News



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Vet's Vamp reunion



BIRTHDAY SURPRISE: 90-year-old veteran Tony Davies views the Vampire suspended from the roof of his local storage centre in Bath

Anna Harris

VETERAN PILOT Tony Davies was given a special 90th birthday surprise when he was reunited with the Cold War fighter he flew more than 60 years ago.

Bath-based Tony qualified to fly the de Havilland Vampire in 1961 and visited local storage firm Vanguard where the vintage warbird is suspended from the ceiling, as a birthday surprise from his family.

Accompanied by his daughter Sarah, he spent time viewing the aircraft and sharing stories from his distinguished Air Force flying career.

His RAF journey began with two years of National Service but his love of flying led to a career lasting 28 years.

During his service, Tony also flew the Jet Provost and Victor and Vulcan bombers. He also performed with The Red Pelicans aerobatic display team in 1969.

After retiring, he joined the RAF Voluntary Reserve and continued to fly Cadets' Air Experience Flights for a further 14 years.

Seeing the Vampire again after more than 60 years was a particularly special

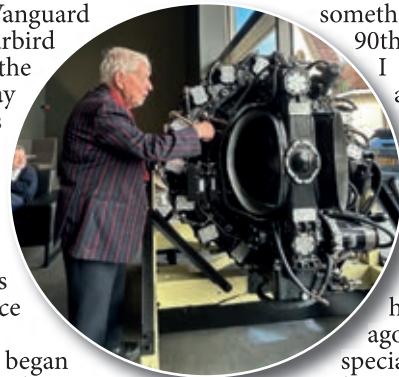
moment. He said: "I felt wonderful and very privileged to be able to see a real Vampire again. It brought back so many memories from the early days of my flying career. One of my favourite memories of flying Vampires was my boss, who we used to call PLR - Plucky Little Roy."

Sarah added: "We wanted to do something special for Dad's 90th birthday, and when I discovered there was a Vampire aircraft on display, we knew it would be the perfect surprise."

"Aviation has always been a huge part of his life, so seeing him reunited with an aircraft he flew more than 60 years ago has been incredibly special."

The Vanguard team presented Tony with a Red Arrows birthday card and a small Vulcan bomber lapel pin in recognition of the aircraft he later flew during his RAF career.

Anil Kellay, branch manager for Vanguard Storage Bath, said: "It was an honour to welcome Tony to see the Vampire as part of his 90th birthday celebrations. Hearing his stories and learning about his RAF career brought the aircraft's history to life. We are delighted we could play a small part in making this milestone birthday one to remember."



NHS probe nets funding

MENTAL HEALTH campaigners are funding a review of how care for veterans can be improved across the NHS.

The Forces in Mind Trust has awarded a grant of £71,695 to the Centre for Mental Health to carry out research into how mainstream mental health services recognise and respond to the needs of former Service personnel and their families.

The project will review veterans' experiences and how mainstream services

care for the Armed Forces community.

Michelle Alston, Chief Executive of FiMT, said: "Many former Service personnel and their families rely on mainstream mental health services, yet staff in those settings may not always be aware of their background or the lasting impact of military service."

"This research will give us a much clearer picture of where care is working well and where support is still needed outside of Armed Forces-specific services."

Forces veterans asked to refund pension overpayments



HUNDREDS of Forces Veterans are being asked to refund overpayments resulting from an error in the administration of the pension schemes.

The issue came to light in 2024 following a Freedom of Information request to the Ministry of Defence obtained by the Forces Pension Society.

For some of those affected, the sums involved are substantial, involving tens of thousands of pounds. For the many Veterans in retirement, the proposed repayments are way beyond their means.

The issue was the subject of a report in the Mail on Sunday (June 7th) which highlighted the plight of a Veteran with 35 years' service in the Royal Navy who is facing a demand for repayment of £18,200 through no fault of his own.

Forces Pension Society CEO, Maj Gen Neil Marshall (pictured) said: "Errors in the complex calculations of hundreds of pensions were made, resulting in requests for repayments and reductions in pensions going forward."

"This is happening to many Veterans in



retirement whose life plans are settled and without the wherewithal to earn money to return overpayments.

"We recognise the principle of recovering public monies that

have been overpaid but we also think it wrong that the scheme administrator who made the error should attempt to recover the money from scheme members who have acted in good faith.

"It seems to us that the requirement to refund the monies should lie with Veterans UK and Equiniti.

"For guidance about how to respond to repayment demands, we recommend those impacted visit our website at forcespensionsociety.org"

* FPS is an independent, not-for-profit membership organisation providing


pension guidance to its growing membership base of more than 60,000 serving personnel and veterans. The Society champions pensions on behalf of the whole military community and, this year, celebrates its 80th anniversary.

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Susie Wood
St Mawgan

YOUNG AVIATION fans got a taste of military life as they checked out the Air Force kit at the Royal Cornwall Show.

Teams from St Mawgan showcased their skills at the event, which gave youngsters the

chance to examine the cockpit of a replica Chinook and take on station Force Protection specialists at paintball.

Station Commander Wg Cdr Gareth Elliot said: "It was great to see so many people engaging with our personnel and learning more about what we do at St Mawgan and across the Service."



CHIEF OF the Air Staff ACM Sir Harv Smyth joined Old Cranwellians at the Officer Training College for the association's annual reunion.

The two-day event included presentations and group discussions on the modern RAF, a formal dinner and a commemorative service at St Michael's Church.

Bulletin



UNSUNG HERO: Sgt Hartzenberg with the Red Arrows-themed JET trophy

Louise joins the JET set

BRIZE NORTON'S Sgt Louise Hartzenberg netted a top charity award for her work with disadvantaged youngsters.

Louise landed the John Egging Trust's Unsung Hero trophy at the charity's recent prize-giving event.

Brize Station Commander Louise Henton said: "Her dedication, professionalism and willingness to go above and beyond truly embody the values of the Royal Air Force and JET."

"This award is richly deserved and reflects the positive impact she has on the RAF Brize Norton JET team and the students the Trust support."

From Sea Kings to sub-hunters

SAR squadron reforms to lift maritime Ops



Claire McCarthy
Lossiemouth

THE AIR Force squadron that trained generations of Sea King Search and Rescue pilots, including HRH Prince William, has reformed to boost P-8 Poseidon and Wedgetail surveillance operations at Lossiemouth.

Disbanded in 2014 after a century of maritime operations, 203 Sqn has been revived to deliver engineering support to the RAF's latest fleet of sub-hunters and surveillance aircraft at the Moray station.

Officer Commanding, Sqn Ldr Mennie said: "It is a great honour and privilege to

command 203 Sqn as it reforms in its new role as an engineering unit.

"Building on a distinguished heritage, we now look ahead to delivering engineering excellence in support of the Poseidon and Wedgetail fleets across all operating environments.

"I am proud to lead such a dedicated team as we generate and enhance operational capability for UK Defence and our allies."

The reformed unit will take over the role

performed by the Poseidon Line Squadron following the arrival of the UK's first Boeing-built maritime surveillance aircraft in 2019. 203 Sqn will also support the new Wedgetail which entered UK service last year.

Originally formed as a Royal Navy unit in 1914, the squadron became the RAF's Sea King Operational Conversion Unit in 1996, based at St Mawgan.

It was relocated to Valley in Anglesey in 2008 to train Search and Rescue crews until its disbandment in 2014, following the withdrawal of the Sea King from UK service.



KING'S BIRTHDAY

PROMOTIONS IN AND APPOINTMENTS TO THE MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MOST HONOURABLE ORDER OF THE BATH

As Companions

AVM J. J. Attridge OBE
AVM M. J. Smeath CBE

PROMOTIONS IN AND APPOINTMENTS TO THE MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MOST EXCELLENT ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

As Knight Commander

AM P. H. Lloyd CBE

As Commanders

Air Cdre (Now AVM) A. T. Martin OBE
Air Cdre R. Fogden
Air Cdre C. H. O'Grady

As Officers

Gp Capt A. N. Bennett
Gp Capt R. C. Cameron
Wg Cdr (Now Gp Capt) J. Brooks
Wg Cdr (Now Gp Capt) N. J. Duncan
Wg Cdr K. J. Bissett
Wg Cdr J. P. L. De Val
Lt Col T. D. H. Oakley (Army)
Wg Cdr S. M. Tunstall

As Members

Sqn Ldr R. P. G. Allison
Sqn Ldr D. J. Wilkes
Flt Lt (Now Sqn Ldr) K. Turner
Flt Lt J. D. Hobkirk
Flt Lt P. Medford
Fg Off (Now Acting Sqn Ldr) G. W. A. Hughes
MAcr C. J. Bradbury
WO R. A. Grimshaw-Else
WO M. Subramaniam
MAcr P. R. Welsh
Sgt P. G. Cook (Army)
Cpl (Now Acting Sgt) B. A. Andrews
Cpl K. Youle

King's Volunteer Reserves Medal

Wg Cdr B. M. Colligan
AS1 D. J. Goodwin

Associate Member of The Royal Red Cross

Flt Lt N. L. Cordingley
WO K. R. Ward



1 GROUP COMMENDATION: C-17 Air Drop Team

PROMOTIONS IN AND APPOINTMENTS TO THE CIVILIAN DIVISION OF THE MOST EXCELLENT ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE

As Members

Mr D. Macdonald
Mr M. K. C. Wills

British Empire Medal

Mr J. J. Kinghorn
Mr G. Hill

MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL

MAcr (Now Flt Lt) C. K. Hall
MAcr (Now Flt Lt) P. T. Williams
WO P. F. Belcher
WO K. M. Bramley
MAcr L. Cooper
MAcr S. A. Davy
WO A. J. Demarney MBE
WO S. M. Drinkel
MAcr S. H. Duncan
WO D. J. Fox
WO D. W. Gordon MBE
WO D. A. Hoare
MAcr R. Moreland
WO J. R. Moss
WO S. R. Parker
MAcr A. M. Welham-Jones
WO Class 1 D. P. Wood (Army)
WO D. T. Worboys
Acting WO C. J. Lewis

Acting WO P. S. MacDougall
WO Class 2 A. G. Beacock (Army)
FS A. E. Brown
FS P. M. Jackson
FS P. A. Robinson

CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF COMMENDATIONS

Wg Cdr P. J. Crook
Wg Cdr M. J. Gower
Sqn Ldr (Now Wg Cdr) P. M. Duke
Maj P. Kruger (USAF)
Capt B. Gurung (Army)
FS M. Eastaugh
Sgt S. C. Hulme
Cpl (Now Acting Sgt) A. Manaa
Cpl G. Cavanagh
AS1 (T) (Now Acting Cpl) D. Grice
AS1 C. J. D. Lee
Mrs S. L. Herring

Team Commendations

- F-35 Programme Team, Air Capability & Programmes, HQ AIR
- 3 (Fighter) Squadron Engineering Team, RAF Coningsby
- 12 Squadron, RAF Coningsby
- Training Development Flight, Recruit Training Squadron, RAF Halton
- Air and Space Warfare Centre Prototype Warfare Team WORMHOLE Planners, RAF Waddington

DEPUTY CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF COMMENDATIONS

Wg Cdr M. P. Allen
Wg Cdr J. A. Bradburn
Fg Off J. D. Collyer
Sgt L. C. Taylor
Cpl Z. L. Warhurst
Mr M. Lane
Dr A. Lytton
Miss C. S. Potter

Team Commendations

- Project ULTRAVIRUS Capability Delivery Team, HQ AIR/MOD Abbey Wood
- Royal Air Force Recruiting & Selection 'Town Show Team', RAF R&S, RAF Cranwell

AIR AND SPACE COMMANDER COMMENDATIONS

Wg Cdr J. R. E. Ankers MBE
Sqn Ldr S. M. Bradley
Sqn Ldr A. J. Cowie
Sqn Ldr R. A. Desmond
Sqn Ldr K. E. Jones
Sqn Ldr M. Platt
Sqn Ldr P. D. Williams
Capt (Now Maj) H. Clarke (Army)
Flt Lt K. P. Cassar
Flt Lt N. P. Gray
Flt Lt O. C. Henderson
Flt Lt M. L. Kallenberg
Flt Lt A. R. McDowall
Capt A. Mclean (Army)
Flt Lt R. Needham
Acting Flt Lt (Now Flt Lt) S. E. Casey
MAcr J. P. Mulcahy
WO M. A. Price
Chf Tech C. J. Marshall-Brown
Sgt L. K. Broster
Sgt W. H. Davidson
Sgt C. Hall (Army)
Acting Sgt S. G. D. Scorer
Cpl (Now Fg Off) S. Duthie
Cpl J. Parkes
Ms L. M. Ross

Team Commendations

- Movements Section, RAF Coningsby
- 29 Squadron Tactical Intercept Training Syllabus Re-design Team, RAF Coningsby
- Project Vigilant Team, RAF RCO
- Vampire Capability Development Team, RAF High Wycombe
- RAF Regiment Further Training Team, RAF Regiment Training Wing, RAF Honington
- 6 Squadron Engineering, RAF Lossiemouth
- F-35 Air Wing Security Flight, 6 Royal Air Force Police (F-35) Security Squadron, RAF Marham
- Operation ICARUS – Engineering Team, 207 Squadron, RAF Marham
- UKMFTS Fast Jet Transformation Team, RAF Valley and MOD Abbey Wood
- Air SIGINT Operations Team (ASOT), RAF Wyton



AIR AND SPACE COMMANDER COMMENDATIONS

COMMANDER CYBER & SPECIALIST OPERATIONS COMMAND COMMENDATIONS

Wg Cdr L. J. Baylis
Sqn Ldr R. Sloley
Sqn Ldr M. A. Whitty
Cpl (Now Acting Sgt) E. Roebuck
Cpl A. J. Swain

CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF COMMENDATION

Sqn Ldr M. J. Hill

COMMANDER FIELD ARMY COMMENDATION

Cpl (Now Acting Sgt) R. D. Hizzett

COMMANDER SJC COMMENDATION

Sqn Ldr M. D. Bennett



MBE: WO Subramaniam (pictured right)



JOINT AVIATION COMMAND COMMENDATION: Chinook Role Demo Team

ROYAL AIR FORCE HONOURS 2026



NOTATION: F-35 Air Wing Security Flight, 6 RAF Police (F-35) Security Sqn, RAF Marham

Sgt K. Sawyer
Sgt J. T. H. Silk
Sgt A. D. Thompson
Sgt J. Towns
Acting Sgt C. Pacey
Cpl J. Simpson
Mrs S. Eckersley
Ms L. Galvin
Mr M. A. Gargett
Mrs S. Jones
Mr I. K. Rushforth
Mrs J. Taylor
Mr S. Wooldridge

Team Commendations

- A35 Plans Team, 78 Sqn
- Physical Education Flight, RAF Leeming
- Estate Management Squadron, RAF Brize Norton
- Receipt and Dispatch, RAF Marham
- ESS Catering and Retail Team, RAF Cosford
- GUARDIAN Installation and Urgent Remediation Team RRH Benbecula
- Ops Trg Flt, Trg Sqn, Tactical Medical Wing
- Explosive Operations Continuity Team, RAF Brize Norton
- Exercise STORM WARRIOR 25-2 Air C2 Force Team, RAF Boulmer
- Training and Standards Cell, Mountain Rescue Service, 85 (Expeditionary Logistics) Wing
- Air CySC Digital Support Flight, RAF Valley
- Welfare Flat Committee, RAF Northolt
- Logistic Operations Team, RAF Lossiemouth
- Expeditionary Radar and Airfields Squadron's Deployed Air Defence Flight
- RAF Honington Catering Team
- Service Discipline, RAF Brize Norton

Air Officer Commanding No 11 Group Commendations
Flt Lt H. L. De Jonghe
AS1 C. J. Crook

Air Officer Commanding No 22 Group Commendations
Sqn Ldr D. W. Campbell
Sqn Ldr J. P. King
Flt Lt V. Allan
Flt Lt R. Dewes
Fg Off B. M. Lee
WO Class 1 S. J. Bawden (Army)
WO Class 2 D. A. Cater (Army)
FS R. Broadbent
Chf Tech J. K. Vaughan
S/Sgt A. Jaiteh (Army)
Sgt L. Godfrey
Sgt J. B. Motion
Acting Sgt H. D. Lavery
Cpl P. A. G. Black
Cpl L. S. Nocton
Cpl B. Pun
Mr P. McGinn

Team Commendations

- Number1 Radio School Burnham Lecturers
- Number 4 School of Technical Training Management Team
- National Air & Space Camp Cadet Force Adult Volunteer

(Core Team)
● International Training Office, RAFC Cranwell
● Robson Resilience Centre Bavaria
● Command Leadership and Management (CLM) Team, RAF Cranwell

Assistant Chief of the Air Staff Commendations
Wg Cdr P. Stevens
AS1 (T) S. G. D. Lambert

Team Commendation
● Executive Support and Air Board Secretariat

Chaplain-in-Chief (RAF) Commendations
Flt Lt N. Slater
FS K. S. Read

Team Commendation
● St Clement Danes Church

Commander UK Space Command Commendations
Mr C. Scott

Team Commendation
● Inside Out Construction

Director Digital Commendations
Sqn Ldr C. Maguire
Flt Lt A. Phillips-Mahon

Director People Commendations
Sqn Ldr S. O'Kane
Sqn Ldr R. White
Flt Lt J. G. Cadwallader
FS K. Brown
Sgt K. A. Parker
Sgt T. W. Vegh

Director Support Commendations
FS P. Lacey
Ms A. Millington

Team Commendation
● Aircrew Equipment Integration Group (AEIG)

Joint Aviation Command 2* Commendations
Flt Lt E. L. Dyer
Flt Lt T. A. Dymott

Flt Lt A. Eveson
Flt Lt T. B. Smith
Acting MAcr G. T. Caven
Sgt K. E. Ross
Cpl M. P. Duval
Cpl G. L. Jones

Team Commendations

- Chinook Bubble Window Recovery Team
- Survival Equipment Flight
- 2025 Chinook Force Role Demonstration Team
- Puma Redeployment Team
- Engineering Team

ARMED FORCES OPERATIONAL HONOURS LIST

King's Commendation for Valuable Service

Gp Capt K. J. Terrett OBE
Flt Lt (Now Sqn Ldr) M. J. W. Browne
Flt Lt (Now Sqn Ldr) L. J. Travers
Lt J. A. Robertson (Royal Navy)

King's Gallantry Medal

AS1 (T) G. Karnovski

CHIEF OF JOINT OPERATIONS COMMENDATION

Sqn Ldr T. R. Wilen

JOINT COMMANDER'S COMMENDATION

Wg Cdr M. J. Clarke
Wg Cdr C. M. Jacob
Wg Cdr I. S. Lyon
Sqn Ldr A. G. Bagshaw
Sqn Ldr A. C. Cain
Sqn Ldr S. G. Jones
Sqn Ldr R. Raw
Flt Lt J. L. A. Parker
FS A. S. Stobbs
Chf Tech J. T. Walsh

Team Commendations

- 11 Group Air-to-Air Refuelling Cell
- XIII Squadron Reaper Operating Crew, RAF Waddington

COMARRC COMMENDATION

Sqn Ldr C. S. Costello

RAF AOC AND TWO STAR COMMANDER COMMENDATIONS

Air Officer Commanding No 1 Group Commendations

Wg Cdr C. M. Atkin-Palmer
Wg Cdr J. G. H. McFadden
Wg Cdr P. J. Wyatt
Sqn Ldr H. J. Baldock
Sqn Ldr L. Brearley
Sqn Ldr C. W. Childs
Sqn Ldr S. B. Cooper
Sqn Ldr C. R. Daykin
Sqn Ldr G. Kane
Sqn Ldr S. P. Miskelly
Sqn Ldr P. A. Radcliffe
Sqn Ldr D. G. Smith
Maj M. Rednour (USAF)
Capt B. Leonard (USAF)
Flt Lt S. Cassidy
Flt Lt J. P. Greer
Flt Lt A. W. Jones
Flt Lt S. A. Lee
Flt Lt D. A. Walsh
WO A. G. Cryer
FS J. A. Loughridge
FS I. J. Walker
Sgt M. Goddard
Sgt M. J. Haywood
Acting Sgt R. J. Laver
Cpl J. Blower
Cpl J. Clark
Cpl C. L. Storey

Team Commendations

- Headquarters Number 1 Group Flight Data Analysis (FDA) Cell
- High Altitude Parachuting Course Delivery Team
- A400M Club Committee
- Exercise MOBILITY
- GUARDIAN Engineering Team
- ROYAL FLUSH Trials Team

- Jupiter HC Mk2 Combined Test Team
- ISR Operations and Tactics Flight
- 54 Squadron – Rivet Joint Linguist Training Team
- The Air Command and Control Training Team, Air & Space Warfare School, Air & Space Warfare Centre
- 51 Sqn Detachment in Support of Op HIGHMAST 25 (Phase 2 and 7)
- ZZ172 Aircraft Recovery Team
- Number 2 (Army Cooperation) Squadron – Avionic Team
- Operational Communications Information Systems Flight, Cyberspace Squadron, Lightning Air Wing
- Typhoon Support Flight (South)
- ASWC Warfighters Team
- Quest Flight Training Limited Sentry Aircrew Training Service Staff
- C-17 Air Drop Team
- 51 Squadron Mission Support Team

Air Officer Commanding No 2 Group Commendations

Sqn Ldr M. J. Cox
Sqn Ldr J. Pettit
Sqn Ldr M. N. M. Plank
Sqn Ldr K. Ripley
Sqn Ldr R. D. Strangwood
Flt Lt D. O'Neil
Flt Lt J. D. Richardson
Flt Lt G. D. Walters
Fg Off N. Riggs
WO M. G. Lawless
FS N. Gibbins
FS J. Morbey
FS P. J. Westwood
Sgt H. Eastburn-Pentreath
Sgt A. J. Jackson



JOINT COMMANDER COMMENDATION: XIII Reaper Squadron, RAF Waddington

Advertorial.

“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.

Please note letters must be a maximum of 300 words and any accompanying pictures sent as attached, hi-res JPEG files.

Email: editor@rafnews.co.uk Post: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP14 4UE

Letters

MAN OF TASTE: Jeremy Clarkson with his copy of RAF News



Top gear, Jezza

I CAN'T have been the only RAF News reader and Jeremy Clarkson fan to have clocked the copy of the Forces' favourite paper clearly displayed on the TV farmer's desk during an episode of the new series of Clarkson's Farm on Amazon Prime Video.

Just to show solidarity I feel I should brave the queues at the Diddly Squat Farm Shop and buy a pack of Jeremy's Nuts or some of his locally produced Bee Juice.

Perhaps RAF crews at Brize Norton or Benson could offer their services and help him out with some crop spraying to return the compliment.

JT Williams North Cave East Yorkshire

I worked on nuke test jets

YOUR CENTRE page spread in RAF News No. 1632 (May 15) about the nuclear test pilots was stunning – the bravery of the aircrew who performed those missions is remarkable. It also reminded me of my part in modifying Canberra bombers.

In August 1956 I returned from my two-year tour of the Middle East, the first year in Pakistan and the second in Aden. I was posted to 49MU, RAF Colerne, Wiltshire where the main task was converting Canberras, this was known as Srim-work – Specialised Radar Installations and Modification. I worked in the sheet metal shop where all the internal parts of the new layout were made to a very high degree of accuracy.

In the carpenters' shop wing-tip fuel tanks were modified to take samples from the atomic cloud. They were covered with strips of knot-free timber, very similar to a wooden beer barrel but to a standard of absolute perfection. Many years later I discovered these modified Canberras were used for low-level spying over Eastern Bloc countries.

The RAF at that time did an amazing amount of 'in-house' work due in no small part to the skill of National Servicemen who came from aircraft, car, shipping and electronic industries after the completion of their apprenticeships, the regular airmen, RAF-trained, were an equal match and



CENTRE-PAGE SPREAD: Our article about the nuke test Canberra pilots brought back memories for AR Powis

formed a perfect team.

In my opinion the Canberra was the most versatile bomber the RAF ever had, in the 1950s it held just about every record. Perhaps Flt Lt Colin Bell, a Mosquito pilot who wrote the brilliant book Bloody Dangerous, would disagree. It's also worth mentioning that Canberra

bombers were built in American under licence as the B57.

I first saw the Canberra when I was travelling on the A1 past RAF Bassingbourn in 1952, I was greatly impressed.

AR Powis Farnham Surrey

Engineering a name change

High-tech air show signs off before rebrand

Sarah Jones

THIS YEAR'S RAF Cosford Air Show showcased the Royal Air Force's engineering excellence while promoting STEM careers to future generations.

A highlight was the celebration of the Chipmunk, commemorating 80 years since the first flight of this iconic trainer and giving visitors a unique opportunity to explore its legacy.

Among the mix of international, military and heritage aviation was the French Rafale Solo Display, crowd favourites the Vintage Pair, Ultimate Warbirds, and an energetic Jet Pitts display, while heavy air mobility capability was on show with the C-17 Globemaster and A400M.

On the ground, Aston Martin took pole position with their latest F1 car, while static aircraft displays included a Royal Netherlands Air Force Hercules and Apache, further highlighting international collaboration.

A spokesperson for the



FRENCH FLAIR: Rafale Solo Display PHOTO: SGT PHIL MAJOR (RAF)

air show said: "Today was a spectacular day, with non-stop exhilarating displays from all of our participants and fantastic engagement across the showground. The RAF Cosford Air Show is a great day out for everyone, whether a young family or an aviation enthusiast."

This year's event also marked a milestone as the show prepares to rebrand in 2027 as the Royal Air Force Air Show. Same postcode. Same people. Same passion.



FORTIES STYLE: Vintage dress was the order of the day for many



POLE POSITION: F1 car



THUMBS UP: Reds fans



WORKHORSE: RAF Chinook

News



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Win!

Night prowlers

The mossies and their elite pilots taking the fight to occupied Europe



NIGHT RAIDER: de Havilland Mosquito NF.II (Special), No. 605 Sqn, May 1943

IINTRUDER AIRCREW were among the elite of the wartime RAF. Only the 'above average' pilots and navigators were invited to volunteer for what was some of the most challenging, daring and rewarding flying operations of World War II. Their role was to take Mosquitos at low level through the night across Europe to loiter near a Luftwaffe airfield to attack and shoot down returning enemy bombers or night fighters.

In *Mosquito Intruders - Target Europe* (Air World, Pen & Sword Books, pen-and-sword.co.uk) Jeremy Walsh tells the story of the intruder squadrons and their iconic de Havilland Mosquito FB VI aircraft.

At the outset, the value of intruder units is explained. The long-range German Fernnachtjagd had posed as returning Bomber Command aircraft to deceive radar operators, then attacked the bombers as they landed or struck the airfields themselves. However, the Luftwaffe invested insufficient resources into this potentially potent force.

Complexity

The RAF aimed to do something on similar lines, seeking to build up an intruder role. This meant developing the aircrew training programme for night fighter crews and

finding the right aircraft. The complexity of the task meant only the best would do. Flying alone across hostile territory at high speed, in darkness, required pilots of the highest calibre.

The RAF viewed the intruder role as 'a military aircraft and its crew that is tasked with penetrating deep into enemy air space to disrupt operations'. Intruder crews were to loiter around enemy airfields to attack aircraft as they landed or took off.

Longer-range Fighter Command aircraft were selected for the role, notably No.23 Squadron Blenheims in December 1940.

In spring 1941, the American Boston night-fighter in the guise of the RAF Havoc Mk.I (Intruder) entered service. In March 1942, 418 (RCAF) Sqn was formed. A third intruder squadron, 605, followed shortly afterwards.

The first Mosquito NFII (Special) arrived at 23 Sqn in July 1942, marking a considerable upgrade. The first Mosquito intruder operations produced immediate results with German aircraft destroyed on their French airfields.

These attacks caused chaos and confusion. Even the knowledge of an intruder in the vicinity created anxiety. Runway lights were turned on and off, aircraft flew around with or without lights and



Copies up for grabs

WE HAVE copies of *Mosquito Intruders - Target Europe* to win. For your chance to own one, tell us:

What was the name given to the invasion of Sicily?

Email your answer, marked Mosquito Intruders 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 July 10.

Win!

airfield ack-ack guns fired indiscriminately.

23 Sqn headed to Malta in December 1942 to mount intruder operations in the Mediterranean. Operations over Sicily and Axis-occupied Tunisia topped the agenda.

Op Husky

Alongside degrading Axis forces in Tunisia and southern Italy and attacking aircraft and ships, 'train busting' sorties offered rich rewards, with stations and sidings also hit. The squadron participated in the invasion of Sicily, Operation Husky, with sorties over the island and across southern Italy. Activity intensified and Axis bomber and night fighter activity was suppressed.

For the UK-based squadrons, by now also equipped with Mosquito FB VIs, much of their activity

in 1943-44 involved 'Flower' sorties. These were attacks on enemy airfields coinciding with Bomber Command raids.

In September 1943, the best pilots provided 'fighter escort' to 617 Sqn's Lancasters, trying to breach the Dortmund-Ems Canal with huge Tallboy bombs.

Intruding was redefined in December 1943 in Fighter Command Operational Instruction (11/1943). This prohibited attacks on trains and marshalling yards in France and the Low Countries. Alongside 'Flowers', three types of Intruder operations were defined. These were 'controlled' Intruder operations and Day and Night Rangers.

One crew recalled a Day Ranger adventure deep into France. They flew so low, often under power lines and bridges, that they passed flak nests

and recognised unit emblems on German helmets. The Germans occasionally waved, mistaking the Mosquito for a Messerschmitt.

There were peaks and troughs of activity, often weather dependent. Fun and the parties are highlighted but so too are the sudden loss of comrades, sometimes arising from aircraft failings.

Two of the intruder squadrons supported D-Day. All three were then successful in dealing with the 'divers', the V1 Flying Bombs.

That autumn (1944), intruder sorties achieved startling feats. A single 418 Sqn aircraft destroyed eight aircraft and damaged five at faraway Stargard, Pomerania. Meanwhile, 605 Sqn's first Day Ranger to Vienna involved two Mosquitos destroying 11 aircraft and damaging six more. The intruders had reached peak effectiveness.

Bravery

This book moves along at a fast pace, featuring short, snappy chapters working across the three squadrons on a chronological basis. A variety of sources are interwoven and there are some useful maps.

Readers are introduced to a rich cast of characters, witness their incredible bravery and appreciate the dangers they faced. Their inspiring achievements are well told.

Review by Alastair Noble

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Epsom Playhouse

7.30pm Friday 16 October

Terry O'Toole Theatre, Lincoln

2026

www.rafconcerts.uk

Pilot spent **7** minutes inside a nuclear cloud



DANGER DOWN UNDER: Terry, above, was based in Adelaide in Australia when he undertook nuclear test missions, right



SQN LDR Terry Hilliard, who has died aged 93, flew his Canberra jet bomber to Australia in 1958 to take part in a series of tests of Britain's first hydrogen bomb. It was his task to enter the mushroom cloud of the explosion to obtain air samples. He also flew on operations over Malaya and during the Suez crisis.

Hilliard left school aged 16 and entered the RAF as an apprentice at RAF Cranwell, where he graduated as the senior apprentice with the General Service Prize. Shortly after, he was selected to be a pilot.

In 1952 he graduated from the Officer Cadet Training Unit with the Sword of Honour and commanded the guard of honour at the opening of the House of Keys of the Isle of Man Parliament.

After training as a pilot in Canada, he joined 9 Sqn on his return to UK. Equipped with the Canberra B.2, he and his crew were in the squadron's team that won Bomber Command's annual visual bombing trophy. In February 1956, the squadron flew to Butterworth in Malaya and over the next three months Hilliard and his colleagues flew bombing operations against the communist terrorists during Operation Firedog.

At the end of October, the squadron deployed to Malta to support British forces during the Suez operations. On November 1, Hilliard bombed the Egyptian airfield at Kasfareet. After the ceasefire, the squadron remained

in Malta until its return to the UK in mid-December, when he joined 76 Sqn.

The squadron was tasked to support Operation Grapple, the testing of British hydrogen bombs. The first tests had been carried out at Christmas Island in 1957, and this was followed by further tests the following year, when Hilliard was detached to Edinburgh Field, near Adelaide in South Australia.

Four tests were carried out in the summer of 1958, two from a tethered balloon and two were dropped by Valiant bombers from 45,000 feet. Hilliard flew on three of these missions and on September 11, 1958, he was the primary "sniffer" on Operation Halliard.

He took off ahead of the Valiant and climbed above 50,000 feet. After the detonation of the 800-kiloton bomb (Nagasaki was 25 kilotons), Hilliard entered the towering mushroom cloud 36 minutes after the detonation. He remained in the turbulent cloud for seven minutes as radioactive samples, for later analysis, were gathered by sensors in collecting pods

mounted on the wing of his Canberra.

After landing, he released the pod in a secure area and taxied to the decontamination centre. The sortie ended for him and his two crew members with an ice-cold shower and a change of clothing.

The success of Operation Grapple provided the UK with a viable strategic nuclear deterrent capability, which was maintained by the RAF until the task passed to the Royal Navy's Polaris submarine fleet on June 30, 1969.

After his time on 76 Sqn, Hilliard trained as a flying instructor before spending almost four years with Oxford University Air Squadron training undergraduates to fly. Promoted to Squadron Leader, he converted to the V-bombers, first the Valiant and then the Victor. He flew with 543 Sqn in the strategic reconnaissance role.

After appointments on the staff at bomber headquarters, he left the RAF in August 1969.

Two days after his death on April 24, the Wings Museum opened the UK's first in-depth permanent exhibit on Cold War RAF nuclear cloud sampling, called *Into the Atom*. Hilliard had contributed with a video recording of his experiences of flying through a thermo-nuclear cloud and the challenges faced.



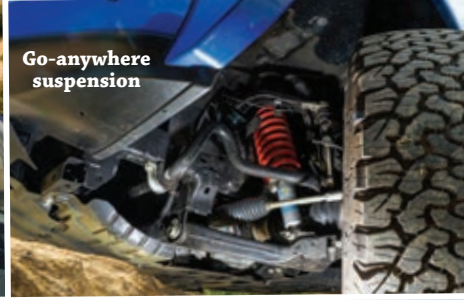
MARRIAGE: Terry on his wedding day and, inset left, in later life



Motoring

Isuzu D-Max Arctic (from £68,326 otr)

Tim Morris



THE NEW Isuzu D-Max Arctic Truck AT35 pick-up is a monster of a machine. The same Icelandic firm that helped *Top Gear* conquer the north pole with a heavily modified Toyota Hilux almost 20 years ago has now been given free rein to craft Isuzu's most extreme models. The latest version also gets tweaks from Isuzu itself.

The result is one of the most imposing pick-up trucks ever to be sold in the UK. The ride height has been raised by more than 55mm on each axle for 266mm of ground clearance at the front and 290mm at the rear. The 17-inch alloys are dwarfed by the 35-inch BFGoodrich All-Terrain tyres that adorn them, making it nigh on impossible to damage them.

Off-road, Bilstein suspension allows for a 35-degree approach and 29-degree departure angle, while the breakover angle reaches 34 degrees. You also get a locking rear diff for mud-plugging/snow snorkelling and hill descent control, so it is a serious bit of kit.

Immense flared wheel arches, chunky side steps and a 'Laser Light' LED roofbar that generates enough intensity to power worlds complete the look.

King of the hill



Interior

The latest AT35 comes with new interior styling and a new 9.0 inch touchscreen infotainment system. Updated software provides a faster response to commands and sharper graphics make it feel smarter as you navigate menus. Short-cut buttons along the bottom of the screen are a welcome addition.

You get the usual refinements, including DAB radio, Bluetooth and your favourite sat-nav app via Apple CarPlay/Android Auto smartphone mirroring. Just as well, because there doesn't appear



to be built-in sat-nav, which is a little odd, given the price.

The cabin is well laid out, with a good driving position. I'd prefer more reach adjustment from the steering wheel, but everything else feels nicely placed. The redesigned seats make the AT35 more comfortable on long journeys and they look properly plush. The dashboard and most upper surfaces are covered with nice materials, that look expensive and are soft to the touch. Lower down surfaces, not so much, but that's in keeping with a vehicle that can get you to the most austere parts of the planet.

There's plenty of storage around the cabin and it is, of course, a pick-up, with a 1,520mm flatbed that can fit a standard pallet lengthways between the arches. Top load space.

On the road

The AT35 is a big beast that places you in a more commanding driving position than anything short of a lorry. You look down on puny Range Rovers, dwarf other pick-ups and muscle your way past white van man with ease. Few pick-ups put you in command of such a large

amount of mobile real estate.

It's not really designed for town work and it won't fit into many UK parking spaces, you'll need to straddle at least two. It thuds over speed ramps, with a jolt, and tight spaces are navigated very slowly, with great care, involving multiple attempts. That said, you soon get used to the size and it's an absolute hoot to thunder around in.

It's powered by a four-cylinder, 1898cc, turbocharged, diesel engine, that develops 162bhp and 266lb ft of torque. Mated to the 6 speed, automatic gearbox, it will give you figures of 0-62mph in 13 seconds, a top speed of 112mph and official fuel economy of 31.3mpg (WLTP).

On-road, it's nowhere near as fast as Ford's Ranger Raptor, but it gets off the mark quickly enough and pulls like a train in the mid-range. You'll invest a good amount of time winding it up for rapid overtakes, but it will get you there.

Speed is not this vehicle's USP, however. Leaving the tarmac and forging a path into the wilderness, that's where its heart lies. In this arena, there are few challengers and the AT35 dominates as the king of adventure.



... and it loves water

Pros

- King of adventure
- A huge fashion statement
- Good payload ratings
- Turns night to day

Cons

- Tractor-level noise
- Too big for town work
- Not fast

Verdict

The 2026 Isuzu D-Max AT35 can talk the talk and walk the

Isuzu D-Max AT35

walk, in the sense that it is just as capable in the rough stuff as its styling suggests. This is a car that inspires you to go in search of adventure and test yourself, trekking miles off the beaten track. You think you can drive and this car will help you to find your limits. This thing is not built for normal.

DARTS



CHAMP:
Chf Tech
Gareth
Edwards

Gareth wins golden ticket

Shot at pro tour for first RAF champion

Daniel Abrahams

CHF TECH Gareth Edwards was in full flight at Cosford to blunt a field of 100 Service darts stars and become the first-ever RAF champion.

The day of action saw the host air base win the Inter-Station event, with Coningsby finishing second and Brize Norton third, with Edwards beating WO Baz Jones in a classic back-and-forth final.

Edwards said: "Winning the first-ever championship is one of the standout moments in my 29-year career in the RAF. It was an unforgettable experience, with exceptional support throughout and incredible enthusiasm from all the players and spectators."

Along with making history as the first championship winner, Edwards returns to RAF Lossiemouth with a PDC Q School 'golden ticket',

funded by sponsor Winmau.

This means he now has the right to play in a Professional Darts Corporation qualifying competition for the chance to win a coveted two-year 'card' allowing him to compete alongside the sport's elite on the pro circuit.

"It is slowly sinking in and it is a great honour," he said. "I am looking forward to pushing myself against some of the best elsewhere now, and I have put my name down for other events. I look forward to speaking with Winmau and starting the journey to be ready for Q school in January 2027."

The action kicked off at RAF Cosford's Apprentice Club, where 32 leagues of four players competed against each to be crowned king (or queen) of the board.

The league format worked well, providing shocks and stylish wins as

favourites staked their claims or fell by the wayside.

Waddington star FS Glenn West was expected to make steady progress through to the latter stages, but he met in-form

Boulmer player Sgt Matthew Sullivan in the board 15 final and crashed out 3-1.

The talk of the league stages was all about Brize debutant AS1 Leyton Nelson, who finished with a 160 checkout to help him beat Lossiemouth's Cpl Matthew Parry.

The finals were all played in the Warrant Officers' and Sergeants' Mess, and following blistering quarter and semi-finals stages it was down to the top two to decide the trophy.

Edwards stormed into a 3-0 lead but was slowly pegged back to 3-3 by High Wycombe star WO Jones, before pinning a double 20 to win the vital fourth leg and the crown.



STATION CHAMPS: Hosts with the most, RAF Cosford

GLIDING

Parcours Combattants a soaraway success in the Alps

Staff Reporter

A GROUP of 25 RAF Gliding and Soaring Association (RAFGSA) members took to the skies above Sisteron in France for the annual Parcours Combattants expedition

It saw junior and experienced pilots take the controls of high-performance gliders through the French Alps, operating in demanding conditions.

The week included pilots from the 'Go Solo' scheme and featured flying from the Aéroclub International Sisteron, where participants experienced ridge soaring, thermal flying and long-range navigation among snow-capped peaks.

"Flying close to mountainous terrain was intimidating at first, but by the end of the expedition I

was operating in an environment I would never have thought possible when I first learned to glide in the UK," said AS1 Harry Cost.

For many of the participants, the expedition marked a major milestone in their RAF gliding journey. Several members first became involved through the RAFGSA 'Go Solo' Scholarship scheme, which supports junior ranks with funding, mentorship and flight training opportunities.

AS1 Harry McBride began gliding through the Mechanics' Endowment Fund (MEF) scheme at RAF Cosford before progressing onto the RAFGSA Go Solo Scholarship. He said: "Although flying is not entirely new to me, gliding certainly is. It has quickly become addictive."



CONINGSBY CONTINGENT: AS1 McBride, AS1 Cost, Cpl Todd & Cpl de Carvalho

An expedition spokesperson said: "Parcours Combattants is designed to push participants far

outside their comfort zones while developing confidence, decision-making and airmanship in one

of the most demanding gliding environments available.

"The expedition highlighted how Air Force gliding remains accessible to personnel of all ranks and trades, while also providing valuable adventurous training opportunities that directly support military flying qualities and personal development."

Gp Capt Carl Peters, Chairman of the RAFGSA, said: "This expedition represents the very best of RAF adventurous training. The progression demonstrated by many of the participants, particularly those who began their journeys through the Go Solo Scholarship, is a testament to the opportunities available through the RAFGSA."

● To find out more about RAF Gliding, visit: rafgsa.org and rafgsa.org/solo.

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

Sport

BOXING



ON TARGET: AR Amelia Kennedy, right, at the National Champs

Daniel Abrahams

“THE BEST career move ever,” is how AR Amelia Kennedy described her first year in RAF Boxing.

The Brize Norton-based Mover has seen her five-year sporting journey lift off to incredible heights and after just one year in the Service she has become the first Air Force women’s National Amateur Champion, after winning the Under-54kg weight category in Derby.

The 26-year-old said: “RAF coaching has been unreal. They help you discover how you box best. Working with them to find my own style was a great journey. It’s great coaching and tactically they are incredible. The trust both ways put together works so well. It is calming to have someone behind you that you trust.”

Kennedy (right), attended the recent Ed Bilbey event (see opposite page) to support her colleagues, having boxed in the event last year, winning her weight class and best senior female boxer.

She spoke with *RAF News* as she prepared for the 4 Nations championship – in which she went on to win gold – having automatically qualified through her Nationals win.

“I made England Assessment at the English Institute of Sport in Sheffield, based on the Derby win,” she said.

“Fighting for England is another huge tree to chop down.

National champion Amelia Kennedy is moving mountains

Rapid rise to the top for logistics worker



It’s been a massive goal of mine to wear my country’s colours.

I hope after this there will be other opportunities.”

The former county tennis star came to her new sport during Covid, needing something to inspire her to push herself.

Finding an immediate love for the hardest game, she said: “I felt at home. I started at 21, so a late starter, huge imposter syndrome – but once I started winning, it felt natural.

“I fought the best at the Nationals – no short-cut, I earned it. I’ve worked my bits off to be here, so my imposter syndrome, which I have struggled with, is less.”

Always looking to build her beloved Service’s team, Kennedy added: “I hope this inspires people to pick up the gloves. It would be



WINNING FEELING: Kennedy clinches the National title at Derby

lovely to have more girls give it a go, it was just Cpl Carys Mainwaring and Cpl Frankie Lyall when I joined, now we have several great female fighters and with the team growing it’s really buzzing.

“We have created such a great environment and team – it’s fun

to train, which takes the work out of it. I would say to any girls wanting to give it a go to just do it. If you have that belief in yourself, try it. That was me, I had never worn boxing gloves before then I started winning and I found ‘I really like this feeling.’”

BOXING

Bilbey Box Cup medals haul

Daniel Abrahams

SERVICE BOXING'S Elite and Development stars produced an impressive gold and silver medal-strewn return from the prestigious Ed Bilbey Box Cup in Nottingham.

A team of 15 aviators attended the tournament which honours the memory of Ed Bilbey, a 17-year-old boxer who tragically lost his life following a bout in 2017.

An association spokesperson said: "The competition marked another successful chapter for RAF Boxing, showcasing our sporting excellence."

Kicking off the gold medal haul, AS1 Alex Cross secured three victories to take top honours, while Sgt Cam Lewis (*inset right*), recently crowned National Champion and Manchester Box Cup Gold Medallist, secured yet another gold with two wins.

Cpl Carys Mainwaring not only claimed gold with a dominant performance but was also awarded Best Senior Female Boxer, recognition of her exceptional skill and composure throughout the competition.

The team also won four silver medals: AS1(T) Alex



Masterman delivered a standout performance with two wins en route to the final, while Cpl Jen Sabine claimed silver after a one-bout victory. AS1 Lilly Surrudge and AS1(T) Blaine Lambert also fought strongly to earn second-place finishes in their respective divisions.

Reaching the quarter-final stages, Cpl Arran Devine, AS1 Jack Bushell, AS1 Todd Samways, AS1 Kieran Brimicombe, Cpl Jos Sumpter and AS1 Andy Cutting each demonstrated resilience and skill against high-level opposition.

AS1 Harry Jacques and AS1(T) Jayden Johnson both secured semi-final finishes, narrowly missing out on podium places but gaining valuable competitive experience.

The team spokesperson added: "The team not only benefitted from a two-week training camp at Brize Norton in the build-up to the Bilbey event, which saw competitor levels raised with the presence of a seven-strong German Defence Force boxing team, who contributed to the international standard of the event and secured four medals of their own. Their inclusion added further competitive depth and strengthened ties between the allied forces."



SEMI-FINAL FINISH: AS1 Harry Jacques (*left above*) narrowly missed out on a podium place but had a good competition

● **THREE RAF boxers won**

medals representing their countries at the top-tier amateur 4 Nations tournament in Scotland recently.

There was a gold in

Motherwell for AR Amelia Kennedy and a silver for Sgt Cam Lewis, both representing England, and a bronze for Cpl Carys Mainwaring, for Wales.

RUGBY

RAF reign at Murrayfield

IT WAS back-to-back wins for RAF Scotland and Northern Ireland rugby as they took the Tri-Service Scotland Trophy with the last kick of the game.

The win, courtesy of the boot of AS1 Jordan Robbins, also saw the RAF win the Terram Pugat Astra Trophy for defeating the Army 15-14 at the home of Scottish rugby – Scottish Gas Murrayfield.

Deputy tournament director Wg Cdr Dougie Potter described the win as "Not good for my ticker," adding "There was some great rugby on show. It was a great day."

"We are hoping for bigger and better next year with a growing crowd."

"The stadium helped make it a day to remember. For many of the players, it will be the best day ever. It was a first for Service rugby for at least 20 years to play at Murrayfield. To win it with the last kick of the game made it extra special for us."

Opening the aviators' account, AR Freddie Richardson touched down but the Royal Navy fought back to lead 7-5, the only time the RAF were behind in the game.

AS1 Jack Martin then ran in the first of his hat-trick of tries, which AR Freddie



MURRAYFIELD MAGIC: RAF Scotland & NI

Richardson converted to see the RAF lead at the break.

Martin went over again just after the interval, with Richardson converting again and AS2 Finn McCoubrey made it 26-7 at the half hour mark, with Martin going over again as the RAF secured a 31-12 win.

Having seen the Army cruise to a 52-0 win over a tired Navy team, the RAF could have been forgiven for being concerned, but they powered over with Cpl Stevie



MAKE OURS A DOUBLE: Aviators hold aloft the Tri-Service Scotland Cup and Terram Pugat Astra Trophy

Southall touching down for a converted 7-0 lead.

The Army fought back to level things before the injured AR Richardson, clutching his collar bone, touched down what seemed to be the winner, only for

the Army to haul things back to lead 14-12 with a few minutes left.

A sloppy Army penalty as the aviators pressed allowed them the chance to win it, which they duly did as AS1 Jordan Robbins calmly kicked over to snatch victory.

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

Sport

ICE HOCKEY

Pumas in IS treble

Daniel Abrahams

THERE WAS a hat-trick of Inter-Service glory for the RAF Pumas women's ice hockey team as they dominated the field to win at Ice Sheffield.

The third title came after they beat British Army Fury 4-3 thanks to a Cpl Teresa Lewis hat-trick and solo effort from Flt Lt Hannah Beaumont, meaning they retained the trophy they have held for the last two years.

The win was not without a few nerves, as having blasted into a three-goal lead, the Pumas were pegged back to 3-3 and over time.

Head coach Cpl Andy Rourke, who was overseeing his final game, said: "It was hard work, but it paid off. This was a good way to end, on a high."

"They were apprehensive going into it - it took us until the last week and even the morning of the game for them to settle down."

"It was a shock for the girls to see a three-goal lead vanish and it took a reset and a bit of calm for them to go into overtime and do the business. The fact they were able to dig deep shows who they are."

A buzzing Sheffield Ice crowd of 600 spectators witnessed the good and bad for RAF men's ice hockey as the Aces, also searching for a hat-trick of IS wins, crushed the Army Blades 9-3 before stumbling to defeat at the hands of the Royal Navy Destroyers 4-2.



NARROW WIN: RAF Pumas defeat Army Fury 4-3 to win Inter-Service crown

©trishthompsonphotography.com

Goals galore marked the win against the Army, which set up the Grand Final, with Fg Off Alex Sampford smashing home a hat-trick as the Aces ran riot, in a performance team captain AS1 Barry Fee described as a 'menacing display'.

"We were going for the triple of wins and this opening display

was the type of display we always hope to put on. We did not stop. We were menacing against the Blades, and we were expecting to win against the Navy."

Having marked the passing of three RN personnel in a helicopter accident in the run-up to the tournament with a minutes' silence before the game, both

teams went on to provide a thriller.

The Aces met their opponents head-to-head with physicality and skill, levelling after going one behind in a game that provided non-stop action in front of another packed house. But this time the aviators would not take the title, in what must be seen as a shock result.

Rourke bows out on a high

THERE WAS a double farewell for Service ice hockey at Sheffield as Pumas coach and Aces player Cpl Andy Rourke said goodbye to his beloved association, stepping down as he leaves the RAF.

Rourke, who took over as the Pumas head coach five years ago, sparked a revolution in the team and Service women's ice hockey.

He said: "The girls responded brilliantly and bought into everything. Getting the first title was key to set the dynasty off, then to secure it with a second and now third IS crown is fantastic."

"The timing was perfect for me - it could not be better. I loved doing this job and playing for the Aces. It is not nice to leave a job you really want to do, but I am happy with what has been achieved and where things are left. It was emotional."

"I handed in my Aces jersey too, so it was a double hit, but it was more pride than sadness at the end."

Although leaving full-time RAF service, Rourke (right) will remain with the Air Force as a reserve and will still be head coach of U K A F women.



HOCKEY

Unbeaten Benson retain inter-station title

BENSON SECURED back-to-back Inter-Station hockey titles after two days of white-hot action at the National Sports Centre, Lilleshall to retain the Brent McCarthy Cup.

The win came after a stunning tournament from the airbase, which saw them hold their nerve to win on penalty flicks, with Cpl Kiera Hayman producing a brace of saves to win the shootout 2-0.

Unbeaten

A tournament spokesperson said: "Benson remained unbeaten throughout the tournament, they combined attacking firepower with defensive resilience and demonstrated exceptional composure in both knockout penalty shootouts to retain the crown."

"Their triumph at

Lilleshall cements their status as back-to-back RAF Hockey Inter-Stations champions, a fitting reward for a consistently outstanding tournament performance."

The event featured more than 70 personnel, with some teams merged to ensure full 11-a-side matches.

The choice results saw RAF Waddington/Digby beat Brize Norton 6-1, while Benson/Leeming/Odiham crushed Akrotiri/Lossiemouth 8-0 at the close of day one.

RAF Benson/Leeming/Odiham topped the standings with two wins from two, with Halton/High Wycombe remaining unbeaten.

Day 2 saw the first semi-final, with Halton/High Wycombe overcoming Akrotiri/Lossiemouth 4-2, while the



DAY ONE: AS1 Jess Bricknall (right) of Benson closes down Akrotiri's AS1 Niamh Mayne

second semi-final proved one of the tournament's standout contests. Momentum swung

throughout, but Benson's experience ultimately proved decisive after the game ended

2-2, with the eventual winners securing a penalty flicks win, 2-1, over Waddington/Digby.

The final saw Benson take an early lead through Cpl James Havlin, with AS1 Liam Connelly firing home to level the scores.

Halton pressed but were held back by Hayman in the Benson goal, who produced a series of outstanding saves, standing firm under intense late pressure to keep the scores level through to the final whistle.

Hayman's heroics continued into the penalty shootout, where she produced two outstanding saves from Halton/High Wycombe/Cosford's flicks.

Demonstrating exceptional composure under pressure, the keeper helped secure a 2-0 victory and clinch the title for Benson/Odiham/Leeming.

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



Girlpower

The mover taking world of Service boxing by storm

See p24



3-0: AS1(T) Josh Storey-Randell fires in the final goal for TG5
PHOTOS: RICHARD WATT (BRIZE)

Ground Engineers (TG5)	3
Icarus	0

FOOTBALL

Daniel Abrahams

GROUND ENGINEERS (TG5) stormed to a 3-0 win to take The RAF Astra Trade League Final at Wantage Town FC and round off another superb season of Service football.

First-time finalists and Churchill Division champions Icarus FC faced second-time finalists Ground Engineers (TG5), with both teams fully prepared for what promised to be a highly competitive encounter.

Notably, both sides fielded full match day squads for the first time this season, and the game began at the high tempo expected of a final.

Opening the day's football action, a RAF Select XI beat Football United 5-3 in a thrilling exhibition clash.

The Service side went two goals behind after 20 minutes, but a series of changes saw them fire in five without reply before United got a third late in the game, for the military men to lift the FA's Football United Shield

Engineers break new ground with Astra win



EXHIBITION: RAF Select XI game

for the first time.

Gp Capt Louise Hancock, the RAF FA's Director for Equality and Diversity, said: "Events like this demonstrate that football can unite communities, challenge perceptions and create an environment where everyone feels they belong, both on and off the pitch."

In an action-packed opening to the main event, it was TG5 who made the breakthrough when Cpl Jake Smith rose above his defender to powerfully head

home from a deep free kick, past Flt Lt Adam Broome.

Stunned Icarus slowly roused themselves, responding with a couple of efforts towards the end of the first half, but they could not change the scoreline going into the break.

TG5 struck early into the second period as Smith made it a brace.

A corner caused problems for the Icarus defence, who were unable to clear effectively, allowing Smith to capitalise on a loose ball and fire home.

Icarus pushed forward in search of a route back into the game, committing numbers in attack. Despite their efforts, they were unable to break down a resolute TG5 defence.

Late in the second half, TG5 added a third goal to put the result beyond doubt. AS1 (T) Josh Storey-Randall latched on



to a precise through ball, showed composure under pressure, and calmly slotted past the advancing Icarus goalkeeper into the

top corner to make it 3-0 and confirming Ground Engineers (TG5) as RAF Astra Trade League champions.



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R'n'R



Win!

Win British Airways book
● p5

From *Midwife* to musicals – Helen George

● See pages 4-5



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

BREW+
BAKE!



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

**COMBAT
STRESS**
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH



Exhibitions

Living Labyrinths: Art & Fungi

Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, Oct 3-Feb 21, 2027

Gemma's putting the fun into fungi

A NEW exhibition exploring the world of fungi through a lens of scientific enquiry opens at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and Art Gallery, Exeter (RAMM) this autumn.

Living Labyrinths: Art & Fungi runs from October 3 to February 21, 2027, bringing together the work of leading contemporary artists to reimagine our relationship with the earth.

A spokesperson for RAMM said: "The exhibition explores themes of symbiosis and biodiversity, as well as concepts from medical mycology. Through artworks in a range of media including ceramic, glass, photography, painting and textile, *Living Labyrinths: Art &*

Fungi offers thought-provoking interpretations of mycorrhizal networks. The exhibition considers how fungi shape both our physical and conceptual worlds.



"Newly conserved dried specimens, natural history drawings and lantern slides from across RAMM's collections of fungi have inspired two new art commissions. Working at

the intersection of art, science, mathematics and philosophy, the internationally acclaimed artist and academic Gemma Anderson-Tempini presents a large-scale drawing of the human mycobiome.

"Working with pigments ground from Devon geology, red sandstone from Exmouth and volcanic and Triassic Permian soils from Killerton Estate, Anderson-Tempini maps the largely invisible fungal communities that inhabit the human body," the spokesperson added.

"Sound artist Jason Singh will present a multichannel biosonification sound installation derived from the electrical biodata of fungi, mycelium and soil, and environmental field recordings



BODY OF WORK: Anderson-Tempini with *Mycro-mother*, 2025-6 (Photo: Simon Tutty)
Inset left, Holly Stevenson, *Absolute Troopers*, 2024 (Living Labyrinths, RAMM, Exeter, 2026)

from locations across Devon. These feature elements such as water, birdsong and ambient sound captured at different times of day, enabling listeners to experience the environments from which mushrooms emerge."

Elsewhere in the exhibition, contemporary works reveal the innovative and inspiring ways in which artists have been working to challenge how we view our relationships with nature.

Also on display will be watercolours of fungi by children's author and illustrator Beatrix Potter.

An accompanying programme of events will run through the autumn, to include *The Mushroom Show* with Scratchworks Theatre Group and an evening talk on Potter's fascination with mushrooms.

● **Go to:** rammuseum.org.uk for further details.



Film

Landship (15)

In cinemas now

Hell of WWI's Passchendaele



LANDSHIP, A World War I action epic from the makers of *Lancaster Skies* and *Battle Over Britain*, is in cinemas now.

The film will have a special Q&A screening with director, producer and writer Callum Burn, producer and writer Andrew Burn, lead actor Vin Hawke and sound designer and composer Ben Thatcher on July 1 at Kinema In The Woods in Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire.

From Kaleidoscope Entertainment, *Landship* brings to life a true story from 1917's Battle of Passchendaele. For three years the Great War has been raging and two armies find themselves entrenched along the 400-mile Western Front. At the start of a pivotal allied offensive to break the stalemate, the nine-man crew of a British MKIV Tank set out to destroy a series of

heavily defended German bunkers.

Advancing across no-man's-land under intense enemy fire, all seems lost when the tank becomes trapped in a giant shell crater, within only a few yards of enemy lines. However, determined not to perish amongst the fetid mud and poison smog of the battlefield, the soldiers refuse to resign themselves to their fate. Instead, the men rally together to fight for survival against starvation, shellshock and relentless gunfire.

Landship stars Vin Hawke (*The Terror*, *Battle Over Britain*), David Dobson (*Lancaster Skies*, *Spitfire Over Berlin*), Matthew Canny (*Coronation Street*) and Jack Sherlock (*Hedda*, *Vigil*).

● **Go to:** thekinemainthewoods.co.uk for more information about the special screening.



Film Review

Night & Day (12A)

In cinemas now

A sheep in Woolf's clothing

ATENACIOUS young woman resists the expectations of Edwardian society, swerving marriage to pursue astronomy in this light but uneven adaptation of Virginia Woolf's *Night & Day*.

Katharine Hilbery (Haley Bennett) has little interest in romance, much to the frustration of her father (Timothy Spall), who wishes she would abandon her academic ambitions and settle down, even for dim suitor William (Jack Whitehall). Instead, she spends her time stargazing and dreaming of Cambridge – set in 1910, this is not yet a place for women. Bennett is surprisingly convincing as the headstrong lead, delivering an impressively natural English accent.

Her mother (Jennifer Saunders), meanwhile, is busy compiling a family biography with the help of editor Ralph Denham (Elyas M'Barek), whose presence appears to stir something in Katharine she would rather ignore. Eventually, to placate everyone's expectations, she caves to dim William's proposal, Whitehall providing much of the film's comedy as he fumbles



NIGHT & DAY: Light in substance... and comedy

hither and thither.

Set against the suffragette movement and shifting attitudes towards women's independence, *Night & Day* attempts to tackle ideas of institutionalised inequality but never strays too far from being an awkward romantic comedy. Lily Allen appears as spirited suffragette Mary Datchet, though her casting feels a little distracting, not helped by her modern appearance and bright red hair.

Despite the lavish Edwardian sets and crowds of costumed extras, some of the film is strangely shot in an almost documentary-like style, with the camera sitting uncomfortably close to the actors. Though the film, and its score, repeatedly reach for sentimentality and inspiration, those moments are often undercut by humour or simply repetition.

Unlike Katherine, *Night & Day* doesn't seem to know what it wants. It's a film about gender inequality that is dressed up as a romantic comedy, but is ultimately light on both.

Two roundels out of five ●●
Review by Sam Cooney

R'n'R



Radio
Quiz pilots
Radio 4



SIMON REEVE: Adventurer presents *Around the World in 80 Ways* on Radio 4.
PHOTO: BBC Pictures

A world of quizzing to keep listeners on their toes at Radio 4

RADIO 4 has launched a new season of quiz pilots, spanning everything from books and history to maths and global adventures.

Clare Balding hosts *Bookmarks*, celebrating the joy of reading; Lucy Porter explores moments from the BBC's archives in *Déjà News*; from June 28 to July 5 Max Fosh puts contestants' mathematical thinking to the test in *Your Number's Up*; and from July 12 to 19 Simon Reeve takes listeners on a globe-trotting quiz journey with *Around the World in 80 Ways*.

The adventurer, author and television presenter said: "I've spent a fair chunk of my life crossing borders and I know that the world is still endlessly fascinating. Healthy curiosity is so important. It nudges us towards understanding, and understanding is in desperately short supply.

"I hope we can help in one tiny way to turn the world from a series of alarming headlines into a map full of music, cakes, rivers, footballers, flags, wildlife, daft facts and extraordinary people. That matters, because the more

we know about other places, the harder it becomes to reduce them to slogans or stereotypes."

He added: "A quiz like this can help spark curiosity in a wonderfully sneaky way. You tune in for a bit of fun on a Sunday afternoon, and before you know it you've learnt why a particular anthem matters, what people eat at a festival, where a border runs, or why a forest, river or animal is under threat. That's not just trivia. It's knowledge."

Having travelled so widely himself, what is the most surprising thing Reeve has learned along the way?

"The world is always more complicated, more beautiful and more human than you expect. Wherever you go, reality has an annoying habit of refusing to fit into the tidy little box you packed for it," he said.

"I've been to places that people only associate with conflict or poverty and found humour, warmth and generosity. And I've been to places sold to us as paradise and found, behind the palm trees, difficult truths about waste, inequality or the environment."



Theatre
High Society
UK tour

HELEN IS ON WITH SOCIETY

STARRING IN a splashy new production of the classic Cole Porter musical *High Society*, Helen George is in her element. Her father was a big jazz fan. "So I grew up listening to all the greats like Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra singing those wonderful Cole Porter melodies," Birmingham-born Helen recalls fondly. "Doing this show is really special for me because this is the music that I grew up with and sang along to."

From the producers of revivals of Porter's *Anything Goes* and *Kiss Me, Kate*, *High Society* is directed by Rachel Kavanaugh, whose credits include *Shadowlands* and *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, and is choreographed by Anthony Van Laast of *Mamma Mia!* and *Bombay Dreams* fame.

As it begins a 20-week UK and Ireland tour, starting at the Swan Theatre High Wycombe (July 16-18) after a stint at the bigger

Barbican Theatre with a 28-strong cast that also features Freddie Fox, Julian Ovenden and Nigel Lindsay, Helen promises: "It's a wonderful, fabulous, sophisticated escape of an evening, with a huge orchestra and a big brass section. There's just so much joy in this show, the costumes are incredible, the songs are amazing, and I'm over the moon with the cast and crew that I get to work with."

Based on the classic 1956 film (which in turn was based on the 1939 stage comedy *The Philadelphia Story* and the following year's big screen version), *High Society* revolves around a Long Island wedding circa 1951, with old and new flames vying for attention as sharp-eyed reporter Mike Connor (played by Fox) hunts around for some tabloid-worthy scandal.

As the planned nuptials descend into comedy chaos, at the centre of it all is Helen's Long Island socialite and divorcée Tracy Lord. "She's a very interesting character," the actress muses. "One of my first questions was 'Why would we care about her?' because on paper she's got it all. She lives in this fantastic house and there's so much wealth behind her, but ultimately it's a story about human relations and Tracy is trying to control her life in the best way that she can."



ON SONG: Helen George in *High Society*. PHOTO: RAITH

PERFECT DELIVERY:
Call the *Midwife* star Helen George in *High Society*



White Lotus

Helen adds: "It's a bit like *The White Lotus* because everybody's in this world of wealth and fabulousness, and how can we relate to that? But actually we can't take our eyes off them and there are really relatable themes about love and pain amidst all the fun and fantastic songs."

Those songs include *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* via *Well, Did You Evah!* and *Just One of Those Things*, *Let's Misbehave* and the swooningly romantic *True Love*. For this new production the score has been expanded with a selection of additional Porter classics, including *I've Got You Under My Skin*, *Let's Do It*, *Let's Fall in Love* and *All of You*.

Helen sees the music and mirth as

**Cole
Porter
classic**

Compiled by Executive Features Editor Tracey Allen

A HIGH TY ROLE



Tracy Lord as divorcée Tracy Lord in Cole Porter's *High Society* PHOTOS AND FRONT PAGE: PAMELA

a tonic for troubled times, saying: "I come out of the theatre, then I listen to the news and think 'I'm so glad that I'm doing *High Society*, not something that's sad or political in any way.' This is exactly the sort of show that we need right now, and I think that theatre really comes into its prime when the world feels uncertain – especially with a musical that's as much fun and as lively and joyful as this one."

Best known for *Call the Midwife* on screen and the recent acclaimed revival of Rogers and Hammerstein's *The King and I* on stage, George is no stranger to period costumes. Playing English governess Anna Leonowens in 1860s Siam in the latter, she was confined by corsets. Are the early-1950s outfits in *High Society* less restrictive? Helen laughs. "Well, you'd think so, but I'm still never far away from a corset! It's a different silhouette, though, with that kind of Dior A-line skirt with a tight-fitting top silhouette, rather than long, hooped and heavy skirts. The refined elegance of the costumes is just beautiful."

Then there's the character of Tracy, of whom she says: "I think what's interesting about her is that she's a divorced woman in 1951, which is rare and actually quite brave. It's interesting to explore the fact that she's free and independent and only needs a man for love, not money."

Back when she was singing along to Fitzgerald and Sinatra, did Helen ever imagine that she'd have the career that she's had? "You never know how it's going to turn out. I've been very fortunate with the chances that I've been given and I feel very lucky, but I've worked hard for it," she said.

Call the Midwife

Helen studied musical theatre at the Royal Academy of Music in London, toured as a backing singer for Elton John, then landed the role of Nurse Trixie on *Call the Midwife*.

Fourteen years on, the character remains dear to her heart. "Normally at this time of year we're filming a new series but we're having a break, so it's weird not seeing my friends in the cast. *Call the Midwife* is always going to be a part of me and I hope in my future as well. I'm hoping that my time as Trixie hasn't come to an end just yet."

As *High Society* heads out on tour, is there anything she couldn't be on the road without? "I'm taking my kids because it's during the summer holidays," beams the mother of young daughters Wren and Lark. "It's also good that they understand why Mummy has to go to work and what I'm doing when I'm there."

● **Go to: HighSocietyMusical.com for tour and ticket details.**

Interview by Simon Button



MASS APPEAL: Church (left) and Ritchie (below)

Famous Charlottes prove a big noise in new 9-part docuseries

FEATURING CHARLOTTE CHURCH and presented by Charlotte Ritchie (*Ghosts, Taskmaster*), *For The Record: An Incomplete History of Music*, is available on digital now.

The nine-part docuseries, over four years in the making, takes viewers on a jam-packed journey from the very first sound waves at the beginning of the known universe to the future of music in a world of streaming and AI. On the way it looks at everything from birdsong to blues, jazz to jungle and pianos to prehistory.

It's been described as the ultimate mixtape of music history and has more than 100 exclusive interviews with

leading musicians, scientists, and historians from around the world, alongside rare archival recordings.

Director and producer Trent Burton said: "It's been a real thrill getting to speak to so many incredible musicians, historians and scientists for this series and, along with the ever-brilliant Charlotte Ritchie, we hope to make you look at music in ways you might not have before."

Rare archive interviews are also included with, among others, Bob Dylan, Anna Kendrick, Dua Lipa, Taylor Swift, Robert Smith, Kylie Minogue, Paul McCartney, Tim Minchin, Ray Charles, Wilson Pickett and Mick Jagger.

Charlotte Church said: "I feel privileged to be a part of this...I think because music has always been extraordinarily powerful. Human beings need music, I think that music can enhance anybody's life. If you're sad, depressed, angry or stuck, listen to more music."

"Like anyone knows, you listen to a song you love and there's something that happens that makes you feel better."

The series clocks in at over 10 hours, all free, starting over the Glastonbury Fallow Weekend with four episodes, then weekly.

● **Go to: patreon.com/cosmicshambles for more details.**



Books

British Airways in 100 Objects

Amberley-books.com



Treasures of British Airways

BRITISH AIRWAYS has an almost unique history, spanning more than a century from the first flight of Aircraft Transport and Travel Ltd from London to Paris in 1919 to the modern fuel-efficient aircraft of its current fleet.

Over that time the airline has seen many historic events and carried billions of customers. Along the way that journey has generated vast amounts of treasured items, many of which are now displayed or stored at the company's headquarters near Heathrow in its museum, the Speedbird Centre.

From simple in-flight mementos to the Olympic torch, the items featured in a new book, *British Airways In 100 Objects* by Al Bridger (Amberley-books.com) represent a flavour of that collection and bring decades of flight to life.

With a foreword by former racing driver David Coulthard, the book looks at a fascinating range of objects, from a signed photograph of Prime

Minister Neville Chamberlain at the door of a British Airways Lockwood 10A following his famous 'Peace in our time' declaration to a Marmite pot made to mark the airline's centenary year.

A former Chief Pilot and Director at British Airways, author Bridger left school to follow his dream of being a pilot and joined the RAF to fly fast jets. After serving for 10 years, he moved to airlines and has flown many different aircraft including the iconic Boeing 747.

He currently flies the Boeing 777 on worldwide routes.

You could win a copy of this absorbing title – to enter, answer this question:

How long did Al Bridger serve in the RAF?

Email your answer, marked British Airways 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 July 10. Please include your full postal address.





Your Announcements

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

Seeking

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.

I am trying to trace my brother, ex-FS R.E Lee (Bob) born in Sleights, N Yorks, March 1945-6, enlisted in RAF 1960 from West Sleekburn in Northumberland, was in the Telecommunication Branch. Last known posting was Brize Norton and he may have lived in the Oxford area, he would have served for 22 years.

I have visited the UK a few times and tried to contact him without any luck.

I would be grateful if anyone that knew him could contact me, Norman Lee, on: argemtis71@gmail.com.

DO you know anyone who trained at one of the six British Flying Training Schools in America in World War II? The Falcon Field Association: The Next Generation is holding its next annual event in Edinburgh on October 3-4.

This year we are widening our invitation to include anyone connected with any of the BFTSs. If you learned to fly at a BFTS or are related to a pilot who trained there, we'd love to hear from you! Please contact Kathryn Masters by email: falconfieldassociationtng@gmail.com or mobile: 07885 378090.

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 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

ALL ex Clk Secs who were trained on the Apprentice Wing at RAF Credenhill in the 1960s and 1970s are cordially invited to email: David.tibbett@ntlworld.com with a view to arranging a reunion this year.

Associations

THE RAF Air Loadmaster Association (ALMA), which marked its 25th anniversary in May, is looking to recruit new members – serving personnel as well as veterans.

If you are interested in joining, please email Les Weston on: lesalma9001@gmail.com or call: 0753 1523456.

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 you can contact the committee via email:

plumbersrest@outlook.com.

HARTLEPOOL RAF Association Branch was formed on October 29, 1946 and has continued to the present day. Current members and their 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 hereby invited to apply for tickets by email to: treasurer@hartlepoolrafa.com or telephone: 07864857186.

591 SU Association. In its 72nd year of existence, 591 Signal Unit has established an Association (better late than never!).

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

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

THE Association of RAF Women Officers (ARAFWO) is a lively, friendly, world-wide networking group.

Please visit our website: arafwo.co.uk and discover the benefits of membership, plus see what activities and events we offer all over the world.

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



NEW HOME: XX899's cockpit is on the way to Oxfordshire

Buccaneer cockpit on move

THE TRUSTEES of Newark Air Museum have been notified that the Blackburn Buccaneer S2B cockpit from XX899, which has been on loan at the museum since autumn 2018, will soon be leaving for a new home in Oxfordshire.

This will be in an undercover location that is close to where the cockpit owner lives, said a

spokesman for the Museum.

"XX899 arrived at our Gateway Aviation Site in October 2018, when it moved from its previous display location at the Midland Air Museum.

"It is anticipated that the impending departure of XX899 will take place before the end of June," he added.

Centre's summer concert

A CONCERT telling the story of the International Bomber Command Centre (IBCC) will be held at Louth St James' Church from 7.30pm on July 4, led by Musical Directors Clare Bauckham and Greta Marshall and hosted by former BBC Radio Lincolnshire presenter Melvyn Prior.

The IBCC Events programme raises money to support the charity's work with Learning and Outreach. Organisers are asking for a £10 minimum voluntary

contribution from audience members as an admission fee to cover both the costs and raise essential funds to support the IBCC's learning programmes at: internationalbcc.co.uk/visit/events.

The IBCC choir and orchestra support the annual Remembrance service and Christmas Concerts at the Centre and are seeking new members, particularly viola and cello players and bass singers. Email: music@internationalbcc.co.uk for more details.

Battle of Britain Service

THE MINISTRY of Defence has announced that the 86th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain Service of Thanksgiving and Rededication will be held in Westminster Abbey at 11am on Sunday, September 20.

Applications for tickets, stating all names, addresses, telephone number/email address, place and date of birth, passport or driving licence number of individuals wishing to attend, should be made in writing and are to be accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Applications should reach Mr Chris Rothwell, SO3 RAF Ceremonial Support, RAF Ceremonial Office, Bentley Priory Building, RAF Northolt, West End Road, Ruislip, Middlesex, HA4 6NG by July 10.

To assist with seating in the Abbey, applicants are requested to state which of the following categories is appropriate: relatives of aircrew or groundcrew who served in the Battle of Britain; past or present members of the Royal Air Force and its Reserve Forces; members of the Emergency Services or ground support staff during the Battle; or member of the general public.

Please state if you are a wheelchair user.

Tickets, and a note on dress and timings for the occasion, will be issued two weeks before the Service.

Applications are not to be made to Westminster Abbey.

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.**

Important Notice

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Trio take on charity challenge



THREE FOR FIVE:
From left, Penny, Emma and Amy

THREE WOMEN from the RAF Valley community have taken on a gruelling charity challenge – five marathons in five days along the Anglesey Coastal Path – in aid of the RAF Benevolent Fund and Cancer Research UK.

Wg Cdr Penny Butterfield and civilians Amy Plank and Emma Estep were aiming to complete the entire 130-mile Anglesey Coastal Paths route as *RAF News* went to press.

Helicopter pilot Penny said: “The Fund is a great charity, and this is an opportunity for us to give something back. This is a personal cause for me as my husband has received counselling through the Fund.”

Amy’s husband is a Sqn Ldr at Valley. She said: “We’re leaving the island this year, so I wanted to complete the coastal path before I go. I decided to turn it into a challenge and raise money at the same time. The Fund is really important for serving personnel and for families too.”

Emma, a civil servant at Valley and former RAF member, added: “Having grown up and raised a family within the military environment, my children have benefitted from events supported by the Fund at various stations we’ve been posted to.”

The trio have so far raised more than their £4,000 target. Go to: givewheel.com to donate.

Amateur radio society on show

THE RAF Amateur Radio Society Council came together to host an information stand at the annual Cosford Air Show.

The Society, founded in the 1930s, exists primarily for amateur radio operators past and present, serving members and a large part of the veteran community, who benefit from this worthwhile hobby with a spin-off connection to RAFAC and potential training in the use of HF, VHF and UHF comms as well as digital modes, said a spokesman.

The HQ station has historically moved around and followed No. 1 Radio School, starting out at RAF Cranwell, moving to RAF Locking in the 1950s and since 1999 located at Building 536 at RAF Cosford.

“Members of the society communicate like other amateurs with stations all over the world, and indeed, we have regular contact with some of our sovereign bases via HF Radio link,” the spokesman explained.

“The stand was well attended by members of the public, RAFAC



VIP VISIT: ‘Churchill’ and companion at RAF Amateur Radio Society’s Cosford stall

cadets, serving personnel and veterans and many young people attending the show with parents, some taking great delight using a Morse code trainer and being able to send their name using the code.

“ADSB and other modes were

displayed by our team and there was lots of interest throughout the day,” he added.

● If you are interested in becoming a member of RAFARS please see: RAFARS.ORG or contact the HQ station on: 01902 377878 or 07860 496516.

ROYAL AIR FORCE

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The official voice of the Royal Air Force

R'n'R



Prize Crossword No. 412

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the 9 letters in yellow squares to find an air force.

Across

- 7. Football official has to fib about comfort (6)
- 8. RAF gear the man left me first time (6)
- 10. Bloke is disturbed by this monument (7)
- 11. In this format Charles meets counterpart (5)
- 12. **And 5 Down.** Shh! Army TV reveals RAF chief (4,5)
- 13. Facial feature in a foreign country (5)
- 17. Crest on fruit going east (5)
- 18. Fly strong flavour back (4)
- 22. Four at end of story about white substance (5)
- 23. First woman to take a break on mountain (7)
- 24. Atmospheric phenomenon causes online chaos (2,4)
- 25. Frenchman keeps old flame and I company in country (6)

Down

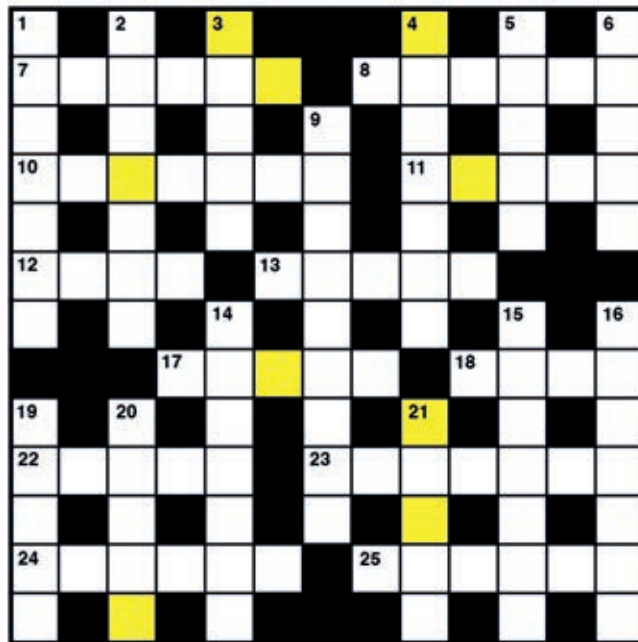
- 1. Exuberance of revolutionary roll (7)
- 2. Capone may barge around mathematical field (7)
- 3. Without fern, different became deeply unpleasant (5)
- 4. Civil war general's dynasty at station (7)
- 5. **See 12 Across**
- 6. Irritable cartoon mouse? (5)
- 9. British broadcaster will batter RAF interceptor missiles (9)
- 14. Yang's partner inside jam is sickly sweet (7)
- 15. Meanwhile I enter in school period (7)
- 16. Valley, for example, where trains meet (7)
- 19. **And 20 Down.** RAF aircraft will completely engross nightclub (5,5)
- 20. **See 19 Down**
- 21. First female entrant won easily, resisting smaller number (5)

Name:

Address:

Air force: Crossword No. 412

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent top aviation title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by July 10, 2026.

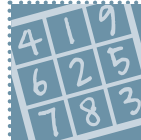


Solution to Crossword No: 411

Across – 6. Pegasus 7. Radar 9. Pumas 10. Banshee 12. RAF Regiment 14. Storm Shadow 18. Cosford 19. Value 21. Basin 22. Hangars
Down – 1. Debut 2. Canada 3. Cub 4. Ransom 5. Cayenne 8. Gangway 11. Erasure 13. Ottoman 15. Raffia 16. Orange 17. Curry 20. Yak
RAF legend – Frank Whittle

Prize Crossword No. 410 winner is: Joseph Allison, Metheringham, Lincoln.

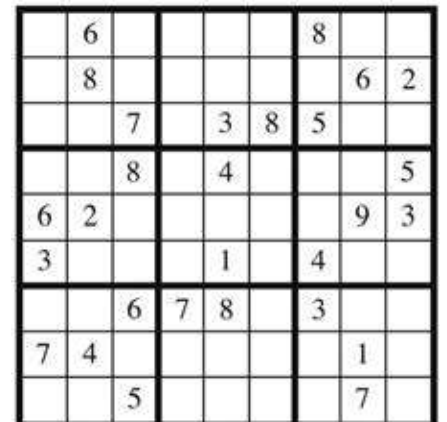
● THANK YOU to readers Dave Masters from Sheffield and Megan Cocker from RAF Cranwell for pointing out an error in one of the clues for Crossword No. 409 (RAF News 1632, May 15). Dave and Megan each receive a top recent aviation book to thank them for drawing this to our attention.



Prize Su Doku No. 422

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 July 10, 2026. The winner of Su Doku No: 419 is: Mrs SM Brewer, Farnham, Surrey.



Solution to Su Doku No. 421

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



Theatre A Beautiful Thread

On tour: hamblets.com

Lesser excels as Thomas Hardy's work is explored

ACTOR ANTON Lesser has one of the best voices in the business, so who better than he to lead a performance which features the work of one of our greatest literary heroes, Thomas Hardy?

In *A Beautiful Thread*, Lesser (well-known for his roles in TV series *Wolf Hall*, *Endeavour* and *Game of Thrones*) reads excerpts from the much-loved author's letters, poetry and prose, including his autobiography.

He also creates voices for Gabriel Oak from *Far From The Madding Crowd* and William Dewey from *Under The Greenwood Tree*.

Lucia Bonbright joins Lesser on stage to portray Hardy's first and second wives, Emma and Florence, Bathsheba Everdene, *Far From The Madding Crowd's* heroine, and Hardy's mother Jemima. Bonbright also sings – she has a lovely, clear voice that kept the audience spellbound when I saw the production at the Oxford Playhouse.

A Beautiful Thread is a moving marriage of words and music, with the violinist and composer David Le page leading nine musicians from the Orchestra of the Swan.

They play a superb combination of traditional folk tunes, original compositions by Le Page and well-known



ANTON LESSER: Perfect voice for the role

works by composers including Holst and Purcell.

The show features some of the most memorable scenes from *Far From The Madding Crowd* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* – the description of Gabriel's first view of Bathsheba as she lies on her back on her horse, looking at the sky, her suitor Sgt Troy demonstrating his swordsmanship, Gabriel confessing he will always be linked to Bathsheba by 'a beautiful thread' and Angel Clare's witnessing of his wife Tess going to the gallows.

A Beautiful Thread is not just a treat for those familiar with Hardy's writing, it's a great introduction for newcomers to explore his work further.

Four roundels out of five
 Review by Tracey Allen



Film Review Exhibition on screen: Frida Kahlo

In cinemas nationwide on July 6

Frida Kahlo on screen

THE LIFE, pain and politics of Frida Kahlo are explored through this updated documentary from Exhibition on Screen, now including a segment from the current exhibition at Tate Modern and following the record-breaking auction where *The Dream (The Bed)* sold for £41.8 million.

The EOS documentaries are brilliant accompaniments that give you a renewed appreciation for an artist's work, examining details up close while providing commentary from various art historians. In the case of Frida Kahlo (*inset*), you're able to witness her style develop in tandem with life events, such as the inciting tram accident of 1925 in which the 18-year-old Kahlo was hospitalised. This would change her path from studying to be a doctor and reconnect her with a childhood interest in art.

Kahlo's talent is evident just one year later in *Self-Portrait in a Velvet Dress*. Over a third of Kahlo's paintings were self-portraits, and though her face and features stayed remarkably consistent, including, of course, her iconic eyebrows, it is in the details that greater meaning can be found, with analysts shedding light on

the use of colour, posture and clothing. From here, the film moves into Kahlo's relationship with legendary muralist Diego Rivera and the political influences born out of the Mexican Revolution. It is shortly after this that you witness the drastic shift in style, first becoming more 'Mexicana' and intentionally naïve, before developing into the dreamlike surrealism that would define her work.

The documentary provides a full overview of Kahlo's life through her work, allowing for a greater understanding of the symbolism in the finer details. It also explains, in part, her continued celebration, ending with the Tate Modern exhibition where critics ruminate on the qualities that have made her an enduring figure: her bisexuality, radical nature and resistance to censorship.

The film's final note leaves a slightly bitter taste, lingering on the many trinkets and products bearing Kahlo's image. It recalls Che Guevara, another revolutionary whose face became so widely reproduced that it risks diluting the message and meaning behind it.

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

