

The Forces' favourite paper



Aviator's greatest act of VC gallantry
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The story of an 'ordinary' Lancaster crewman **Win!**
● See page 21

ROYAL AIR FORCE
Friday, Nov 28, 2025
Edition No.1621 **Only 99p**

RAF News

Gunners' Belgium mission counters airport drone threat

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Athletics
Flt Lt peaks at Snowdon



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Sailing
Silver Fleet Trophy joy



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Gridiron
Mustangs win Inters



● See page 27

'We see you..'



AIR FORCE hot-shots have been battling it out for top honours in the Service's annual photo showdown.
● See pages 14-15



THREAT: Thermal image of Russian ship Yantar off the Scottish coast

UK warning after Putin laser attack

DEFENCE CHIEFS have warned President Putin that UK Forces are ready to act after the Russian vessel Yantar deliberately targeted an RAF Poseidon crew tracking the ship with high-powered lasers.

Defence Secretary John Healey (below) said: "We have military options ready should the Yantar change course. We see you, we know what you are doing and we are ready."



● See p3 for story


BiteSize



“I’m very determined to complete 1.25 million steps,”

Coningsby civvy Brooke Williamson’s marathon walk for charity

See page 13



“I’ve got the panto bug and it’s not going anywhere,”

Radio 2 DJ Scott Mills stars in festive offering at Wycombe Swan Theatre

See R’n’R pages 4-5



“To come back from last year’s defeat speaks volumes about our resilience and determination,”

Gridiron squad General Manager Chf Tech Paul Wakeford on RAF retaking Inters crown

See p27



ROYAL AIR FORCE
RAF News

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Lucy’s in the sky

Simon Mander

A TRAINEE flyer followed in her father’s footsteps when she was presented with her wings by her former RAF pilot dad.

Flt Lt Lucy Taylor earned her coveted badge after graduating from 45 Sqn at Cranwell in a milestone made even more memorable as she was given her Wings by retired Air Cdre Keith Taylor.

She completed multi-engine training with 3 Flying Training School and will now move on to fly the Voyager transport and air-to-air refuelling aircraft.

Reviewing Officer and head of flying training Air Cdre Rob Caine said: “It’s a rare and special moment when a father and daughter share the same call to serve and to fly, rarer still to witness a father awarding RAF Wings to his daughter.

“Having once been taught by Air Cdre Taylor and later served under his command, it’s a privilege to see him now pass that same spirit of excellence and service to Lucy.

“This is what the RAF family is all about – legacy, inspiration, service and the joy of flight.”

Flt Lt Taylor said: “Having a parent in the military gave me a good understanding of Service life and deepened my interest in joining.”



FATHER’S PRIDE: Air Cdre Keith Taylor with daughter Lucy at her graduation ceremony at Cranwell

This Week In History



1940
Malta defence

148 SQN Wellington bombers deploy to Malta, the first Allied unit to be based on the besieged Mediterranean island.

1967
Aden withdrawal

UK FORCES withdraw from Aden, ending 128 years of British rule and 48 years of occupation of Khormaksar and Steamer Point.

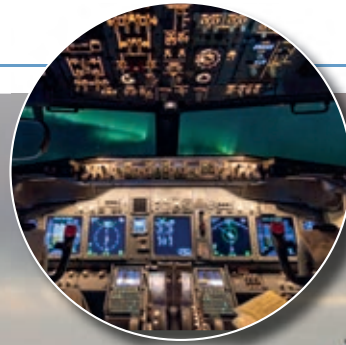


1980
Chinook enters service

THE FIRST of an initial batch of 33 Chinook heavy-lift helicopters enter service with the RAF at Odiham in Hampshire.

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

Northern flights



NATO SECURITY: Poseidon P8s at Keflavik. Inset above, pilots' view of the Aurora Borealis

SUB-HUNTERS HAVE deployed to Iceland as the RAF seeks to step up security in the region.

Lossiemouth's 120 Sqn deployed its Poseidon aircraft to Keflavik Air Base, used by Nato to monitor the North Atlantic.

The mission is part of Nato's Peacetime

Vigilance Activity, which ensures it remains prepared to respond to any potential threats.

The exercise will test the Air Force's Agile Combat Employment drills, demonstrating the RAF's ability to operate from diverse and austere environments.

Nicknamed the 'Curious Cats', 120 Sqn has

been at the forefront of maritime patrol and anti-submarine warfare for more than a century.

The Poseidon, with its advanced sensors and weapons systems, is perfectly suited to the squadron's mission of protecting UK's maritime interests and securing Nato's High North territory.

Wild West

SURVIVALISTS FROM St Mawgan tackled 30 miles of Cornwall's rugged coastline to reach the historic Pentire Point memorial.

Around 25 members of the station's Defence Survival Training Organisation took part in the journey across dramatic cliffs, sweeping beaches and National Trust land.

Battling gale-force winds on the final approach, they reached Pentire Point where poet Laurence Binyon penned *For the Fallen* in 1914.



Bulletin



ITALIAN JOB: Italian Air Force F-35s take to the skies on Ex Falcon Strike

F-35 nations joining forces

LIGHTNING FIGHTERS are being put through their paces as air crew near the end of an eight-month global deployment.

Hosted by the Italian Air Force, Exercise Falcon Strike brings together participants from France, Greece, the United States and the UK.

Involving more than 50 aircraft it aims to integrate fourth and fifth-generation aircraft, refine tactics and strengthen logistics cooperation among F-35 nations.

Air and Space Commander AM Allan Marshall said: "Training side-by-side with our Italian colleagues strengthens interoperability, deepens mutual understanding and ensures that both nations remain ready to deliver decisive air power whenever and wherever it's needed."

"Over the past eight months, the RAF has delivered a truly global contribution through Operation Highmast - from the UK to the Mediterranean, across the Middle East and deep into the Indo-Pacific."

Laser attack raises stakes with Russia



WARNING: Defence chiefs say UK will step up maritime security following claims Russia is targeting crews



Simon Mander

DEFENCE CHIEFS are to step up security operations in British waters in response to Russian spy ship Yantar using lasers to disrupt UK pilots tracking it.

Defence Secretary John Healey said the vessel, on the edge of British territorial waters, was being watched by Lossiemouth-based RAF P-8 Poseidon aircraft.

And he warned Vladimir Putin: "We see you, we know what you're doing, and if the Yantar travels south this week, we are ready."

Mr Healey said using lasers against aircrew was 'deeply dangerous' and that he had amended the way the Navy can respond.

He said: "We have military options ready should the Yantar change course. I'm not going to reveal those - it only makes Putin wiser."

It's the second time in a year the vessel has entered UK waters.

The Defence Secretary said the Yantar was targeting Britain's undersea infrastructure with a view to sabotage in conflict. He said the laser incident took place as P-8s were deployed to "track the vessel's every move," within the last two weeks.

The Russian Embassy released a statement, saying it was "not interested in British underwater communications".

Labour MP Matt Western, who chairs the

Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, said: "I welcome the seriousness with which the Defence Secretary is treating this issue, but there is more we can do. More assertive retaliation may be required."

Russia describes Yantar, which is operated by the country's Ministry of Defence, as an oceanic research vessel. Western nations have often tracked it in European waters and they suspect its mission is to map undersea cables.

Elisabeth Braw, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council think tank, said the ship's use of lasers was "an escalation for sure".

"Essentially, you do it to impede the pilots from doing their work," she told BBC Radio 4's *World At One* programme.



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Regt on drone alert to combat Russia threat

Simon Mander

GUNNERS HAVE been sent to Belgium to counter drone activity causing disruption around airports and military bases.

The deployment of the Leeming-based Regiment unit is in response to a major challenge for Nato which has brought travel chaos to the region.

Chief of the Air Staff ACM Harv Smyth said: "The threat from UAS we have faced here in the UK, that our Allies now experience in Europe, is very real and tangibly dangerous.

"We must not underestimate the threat that Russia and other hostile actors pose to our everyday lives.

"Hostile technology that we could only begin to imagine a few years ago is now reality, with weapons that were once deemed unconventional now mainstream and being used against us daily.

"Our reputation in this field is high, and Belgium knew exactly who they needed to call."

Personnel from the RAF Regiment's Counter Uncrewed Air Systems Wing, with advanced technology, can rapidly and safely neutralise unauthorised drones.

Chief of the Defence Staff, ACM Sir Richard Knighton, said Belgium had asked for urgent help after almost six days of continuous incidents.

He said: "Russia is the biggest



DRONE RANGERS: Counter Uncrewed Air Systems Wing specialists set up anti-drone kit at a Belgian military base PHOTO: CPL ADAM FLETCHER

threat right now, and their illegal invasion of Ukraine has shown what they're capable of.

"Russia is something we should be concerned about. We know they're carrying out sabotage and waging a hybrid war against us."

France and Germany have also provided specialist units and Belgium has agreed to buy detection equipment and systems to take down drones.

Belgian Defence Minister Theo Francken said: "The safety of our airports and military areas

is an absolute priority."

UK Defence Secretary John Healey added: "As hybrid threats grow, our strength lies in our alliances and our collective resolve to defend, deter and protect our critical infrastructure and airspace."

In Brief



RESTORATION: Pembroke Dock window has been returned to Wales

Glass act

EIGHT DECADES after its original dedication, the RAF Pembroke Dock Memorial Window has returned to West Wales.

A commemorative service was held at St John's Church, led by Chaplain-in-Chief The Ven AVM Giles Legood.

Serving personnel, veterans and civic dignitaries attended to honour airmen and women once stationed at the former airbase.

Originally dedicated in the Royal Dockyard Chapel, it commemorates those who served in the Coastal Command flying-boat base.

Following the station's closure in the late 1950s, the window went to Plymouth and later to the RAF Museum in London, where it remained for more than 30 years.



ACE test for Kinloss

Staff Reporter

Kinloss

TYPHOON AND Poseidon crews returned to Kinloss to test frontline Agile Combat Employment tactics away from their Lossiemouth base.

Exercise Soaring Eagle marks the first time UK jets have operated from the Scottish base since the RAF handed it over to the Army five years ago.

The drill is designed to test aircrews' ability to operate from

unsupported locations away from their home base to avoid detection by enemy forces.

Sqn Ldr Peter Armitage said: "Kinloss Barracks has not routinely been used by aircraft for over five years and all the safeguards and controls normally associated with the main operating base do not exist.

"As such, our work has focused on bringing an austere environment up to the standards where we can operate maritime patrol and fast jet aircraft from."

UK salutes WWII Albanian rescuers

AIR CHIEFS have recognised two Albanian brothers who saved the life of a wartime Spitfire pilot shot down over Occupied Europe.

Kapllan and Orhan Sulaj moved WO Tim Vernon Pigot from hills above Sukë and hid him from German forces after he bailed out in June 1944.

The RAF pilot landed badly and suffered serious spinal injuries. Had he been found by the Nazis, he may have been shot on the spot.

The two Albanians alerted partisans who provided medical care and eventually arranged for his return to Italy.

On his repatriation to the UK, WO Pigot endured another year in hospitals. Despite the severity of his injuries, he made a full recovery. He died in 1992.

Kapllan's son Gezim (pictured right with his granddaughter Rudina) was presented with a formal letter of thanks from the RAF.



PILOT: WO Tim Pigot



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HRH PRINCESS Anne made her debut as the newly-appointed Patron of the Star and Garter charity by visiting its care home in Surbiton.

The Princess Royal took on the role following the death of HM

Queen Elizabeth, who served as Patron from 1953, and was given a tour of the centre by Deputy Lieutenant Fr Martin Hislop and Mayor of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, Cllr Noel Hadjimichael.

Flaming hero

THE REAL story of how a RAF Lancaster hero defied death by climbing onto the wing of his stricken aircraft to douse a raging engine fire at 2,000ft has been told for the first time.

106 Sqn flight engineer WO Norman Jackson's actions saved four of the crew and made him a comic book hero. He was awarded the VC for his extraordinary gallantly, described by military expert and collector Lord Ashcroft as the 'greatest single act of bravery' in the history of the medal.

Now Norman's son, David, has published a detailed account of the mission that made his father a national hero. He said: "Many articles have been published but without exception they contain inaccuracies or are not the full story. My book details, for the first time, what actually happened on the night of April 26 in 1944 above Schweinfurt."



● See p19 for feature



CSG makes NATO grade



Simon Mander

BRITAIN'S AIRCRAFT carrier and Lightning fighters have been committed to Nato for the first time.

The milestone sees the Carrier Strike Group reach 'Full Operating Capability', and comes as British and Italian F-35s flew side by side on Exercise Falcon Strike.

The Defence Secretary and Foreign Secretary hosted their Italian counterparts aboard HMS Prince of Wales, off the coast of Naples.

Their talks centred on deepening defence and security cooperation, including joint

efforts to counter hybrid warfare in the face of Russia's illegal invasion in Ukraine.

The UK's F-35s have completed more than 1,000 sorties across their deployment this year, enhancing their warfighting readiness.

Defence Secretary John Healey said: "We are in a new era of threat that demands a new era for defence.

"Our strength comes from hard power and strong alliances, so it is fitting to mark this moment alongside one of our closest Nato allies in Italy. Their F-35s have been operating from

the carrier to demonstrate the deep partnership between our militaries."

The UK's Carrier Strike Group – the largest the UK has ever assembled – will now work with allies for Exercise Neptune Strike.

The training will test Nato's ability to strike targets at sea and includes carrier-based air missions and amphibious landings.

Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper said: "These joint exercises are the clearest demonstration of how the UK is working with our allies to keep our continent safe."

The Carrier Strike Group's return to the Mediterranean follows five months of operations in the Indo-Pacific and training with Australia, Japan and India.

During this latest stage, it will visit Greece, Albania, Italy and Spain.

HMS Prince of Wales has the largest-ever number of 5th-generation F-35 jets from a single nation on a carrier.

More than 4,000 UK military personnel have played a vital role during the deployment.

There have also been more than 50 uncrewed air landings by drones on HMS Prince of Wales alone.



RADAR LOVE: Restoration team work on Cold War radar installation

Neat work

A GIANT Cold War RAF landmark has had its first clean in 30 years.

The T84 radar dish has been restored to its original glory at Neatishead in Norfolk.

Specialist teams have been transforming the 100ft installation, revealing gleaming surfaces not seen since the 1990s.

"You can actually see people doing double-takes as they drive past," said site owner William Sachiti.

"We've cleared one section and it's brilliant army green and eggshell blue underneath. People had forgotten what it originally looked like. It's like discovering a hidden monument."

The painstaking operation involves high-pressure washing, removing 30 years of algae and weathering, hand-cleaning delicate radar components and restoring the original RAF markings.

The cleaning has revealed details invisible for decades, including three squadron markings.

The dish, which is larger than two double-decker buses end to end, has its original 1960s paintwork perfectly preserved under the grime including "DANGER – RADIATION" warnings in pristine Cold War-era fonts.

Restoration work began three years ago to get the radar spinning again after it had seized it up as layers of dirt and corrosion built up and ball bearings deteriorated over time.

Advertorial.



FROM SOLDIER TO CIVILIAN: THE UNSEEN TOLL OF MEDICAL DISCHARGE

For 15 years, Craig lived his dream as a Royal Engineer in the British Army, rising to the rank of Lance Corporal. From childhood, he had only ever imagined one future: a life in the military.

“As a child, I used to say to my mum and dad, ‘I don’t really need school – I’m going in the Army,’” he said. “It was all I ever wanted. So, it was a kick in the teeth to be told I couldn’t do it anymore.”

Craig’s military career was cut short by a wrist injury he sustained playing rugby for his regiment. The injury was initially missed. As Craig continued to work and exercise, it got worse until one day it completely gave way. Further tests revealed it had become a serious and complex break. After major reconstruction surgery, Craig was sent home to recover. Complications followed, and further operations were needed.

“For 14 to 15 months, I was completely isolated at home. I barely spoke to my unit. I was forgotten,” Craig said. “Before the injury, I was a ‘can-do-everything invincible soldier.’ Afterwards, I couldn’t even do basic household or garden tasks. I felt useless, a burden

to my wife. I was no longer invincible – I was broken.”

Despite his hope of returning to duty, Craig was sent to a medical board and discharged from service in November 2018.

“By the next morning, I wasn’t a soldier anymore. Just like that. When I handed back my kit, most people had moved on. Very few people in the squadron even knew who I was. I felt like I’d never existed,” he said. “The process made me feel isolated and unimportant after giving 15 good years to the Army.”

Craig’s experience is not unique. Every day, five people are medically discharged from the Armed Forces due to illness or injury*. Many, like Craig, struggle with the abrupt end of their military career and face the daunting task of adjusting to civilian life.

“I was given three months to prepare for discharge – most people leaving the military get 12 months. I was still receiving treatment, still in pain, and had no idea what came next,” Craig recalled. “It took months for my first Army pension payment to come through. Without my family, I don’t know what I would’ve done. I can see how so many veterans end up homeless.”

Help for Heroes has been a vital part of Craig’s recovery.

The charity provided him with occupational health support, pain management advice, and a specially designed wrist splint. He also receives therapy for post-traumatic stress disorder through their Hidden Wounds service, which offers counselling and psychological support tailored to veterans and their families.

Craig’s medical discharge was tough for his family too, especially his wife, Georgina. The couple have two young children together.

“Craig’s discharge has been an emotional rollercoaster,” she said. “He lost the only job he ever wanted and his sense of identity. There was huge pressure on me to support him through the pain and provide for our family. The system must change to support families during these vulnerable times.”

Craig has since retrained as an electrical engineer but worries about the long-term impact of his injury. Now, he’s encouraging others facing similar challenges to seek support.

“Don’t be afraid to ask for help,” he said. “Help for Heroes are always there when I need them, but it shouldn’t fall to charities to do what the military should be doing for its own.”

* MOD: Annual Medical Discharges in the UK Regular Armed Forces (2024)



Help for Heroes is there for anyone who’s worn the uniform, for as long as it takes. Find out more at helpforheroes.org.uk/get-help.

**HELP for
HEROES**

Falcons fall in

Simon Mander

MEMBERS OF the RAF Falcons Parachute Display Team have begun training in the US ahead of the 2026 display season.

The freefall team flew out to California for Exercise Freefall Endeavour, the first of two annual Stateside training sessions ahead of their displays across the UK and Europe.

The team's dedicated Survival Equipment Technicians were the first to arrive at the civilian-run Sky-Dive Perris training area to carry out kit and safety checks.

Team member Cpl Dyson said: "The job is very physical,



maintaining the equipment hands on, but also involves a lot of documentation and logistics.

"Every component change, every descent must be logged. Our main role is to keep people safe and ensure the team have the right kit to gain their qualifications."



Bulletin



Net gains

Simon Mander

A LOCAL politician grasped the nettle when he visited St Mawgan to see survival techniques taught to Service personnel.

St Austell MP Noah Law visited the Defence Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Extraction Training Organisation to find out how to safely eat the prickly plant.



Del drops in

ACTOR AND RAF supporter David Jason paid a flying visit to Air Command for a tour of the historic Bomber Harris room.

The ground floor office at RAF High Wycombe has been restored to its WWII glory and includes Bomber Command supremo Arthur Harris's red phone and original desk. Since opening, the room has received hundreds of visitors.

Shock report sparks 'zero tolerance' vow

Chiefs pledge action as MoD survey reveals two in three serving women are victims of sexual harassment



Tracey Allen

MILITARY CHIEFS have vowed a policy of zero tolerance after a shock report claims that nearly 70 per cent of women serving in the Armed Forces have suffered sexual harassment in the last year.

The study of more than 90,000 Regular and Reserve personnel revealed that 67 per cent had suffered inappropriate behaviour, from groping to sexual jokes, leering and unwanted advances.

"It doesn't matter what rank you are – my intent is 100 per cent action.."

More than 30 per cent of Forces women said they had been touched in a way that made them feel uncomfortable while eight per cent said they had been subjected to sexual activity they had not consented to.

Just over half experienced lewd jokes or sexual remarks while 24 per cent endured frequent cat-calling and whistling.

More than 30 per cent of women who said they had experienced inappropriate sexual behaviour told researchers they had considered quitting the Armed Forces because of the treatment they received.

Chief of the Air Staff, ACM Harv Smyth (pictured right), said: "There is no place in the Armed Forces for sexual harassment.

"It doesn't matter what rank you are or what role you fulfil – if you are found guilty of sexual harassment in the RAF my intent is 100 per cent action, including discharge.

"Serving with the RAF comes with responsibilities to ourselves and our colleagues. Central to this are our cultural standards of respect, integrity, service and excellence.

"I expect every one of us to demonstrate these standards every day in everything that we do, and to challenge robustly when we see behaviours that fall short."

Now Defence chiefs are to launch a Prevention Task Force delivering training to recruits and set up a Tri-Service complaints unit to deal with more serious allegations.

The UK Military is also to appoint a senior lawyer to review the zero-tolerance policy to make sure appropriate action is taken against offenders.

Military charities which also run programmes to support victims of sexual harassment have expressed their concerns about the report's findings.

Lynne Doherty, Director of Social Care Operations for SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, said: "That this type of inexcusable behaviour takes place will come as no surprise, but the scale of it is a shock.

"SSAFA is working hard to address the sexual and physical abuse, bullying and harassment of serving female personnel in the UK military and to ensure women are believed, supported and protected."



News



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THE WRITE STUFF: Cdr Jim Newton signs the Wall of Gallantry at Cranwell. Below, Lynx in action. PHOTO: GORDON ELIAS

Tracey Allen

THE GULF helicopter hero who used the call-sign 'Scooby' and faced down heavy artillery as British troops engaged in a fierce fire fight in Iraq has spoken of the mission that earned him the first Navy DFC since the Korean war.

Cdr Jim Newton was honoured by RAF survival training chiefs and invited to sign the Wall of Gallantry this month as the latest frontline aircrews graduated at Cranwell.

Speaking to UK and Qatar personnel, Jim revealed how his training helped him beat the odds and save the lives of soldiers from The Queen's Dragoon Guards and Royal Marine Reconnaissance Force under fire from heavy machine guns and Iraqi T-55 tanks.

Reinforcing the military mantra of 'train hard - fight easy' to the Cranwell rookies preparing for frontline duty, the Lynx ace described the challenges of

coordinating strikes against enemy targets at low level while under intense fire.

SERE training instructor Mark Fairhead said: "Jim spoke movingly about the courage and loyalty of his crew and allied personnel - including the selfless acts of close air support pilots who risked their lives to provide top cover during the engagement."

"He embodies courage, humility, and selfless leadership. He is the epitome of leading by example and the unconquered spirit."

Cdr Newton joined the Royal Navy as a pilot in 1991 and served in Northern Ireland and Iraq before commanding 845 Naval Air Sqn in Afghanistan.

After retiring from active duty he went on to found US-based Vantage Aviation, which provides training and equipment trials for defence companies.

He described his experiences as a top level combat pilot in the book 'Armed Action' and donates all the proceeds from sales to charity.



PTSD treatment failing vets

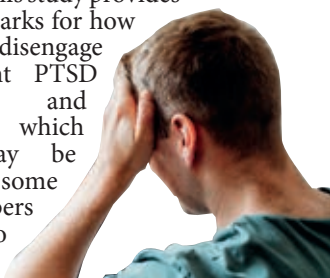
MORE THAN a quarter of military vets receiving psychotherapy for battlefield-linked PTSD drop out before finishing their treatment, according to a US study.

The research by American Psychological Society reveals that more than 37 per cent of patients undergoing virtual reality-based treatment failed to complete the course, while those having cognitive processing therapy had a failure rate of more than 40 per cent.

Present-centred therapy and mindfulness-based stress reduction showed lower dropout rates of 16 and 20 per cent. Dropout rates from intensive

outpatient versions of trauma-focused treatments ranged from 5.5 to 8.5 per cent.

Research director Elizabeth Penix-Smith said: "This study provides better benchmarks for how often people disengage from different PTSD treatments and highlights which therapies may be easier for some Service members and veterans to stick with."



Society fights on over threat to tax-free lump sums

THERE have been persistent rumours of reductions in the pension tax-free lump sum allowance.

Back in October 2024, Forces Pension Society CEO, Maj Gen Neil Marshall wrote to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on behalf of FPS Members and the wider Armed Forces community.

A reassuring response was received from government. But the rumours have persisted ahead of this year's Budget Statement, prompting Maj Gen Marshall to write once again to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. These are some extracts from that letter.

"I feel compelled to write again since the subject is of such vital importance, and the potential consequences of an ill-informed decision too



Neil Marshall, CEO of the Forces Pension Society severe, to wait until the outcome of the Autumn Budget Statement.

"Such a decision would run counter to the letter and spirit of the Armed Forces Covenant

and could trigger a significant spike in resignations, leading to a loss of many in key leadership positions.

"At a time when national defence needs are of such vital importance and recruitment and retention are so critical to our security, the risk is not in the national interest."

Maj Gen Neil Marshall commented:
"So many personnel, serving and retired, have made commitments and planned their futures based on the existing pension promised by the Government. The rumoured change to LSAs (Lump Sum Allowances) would undoubtedly be seen as a major breach of trust."

** The Forces Pension Society is an independent, not-for-profit membership organisation that provides pension guidance to those serving and retired, across all three services, and represents the pension interests of the whole military community. Last year, the Society's expert Forces Pensions Consultants dealt with almost 30,000 pension enquiries. Membership of the Society is growing and numbers more than 66,000. To read the text of the latest letter in full, visit forcespensionsociety.org*



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BURMA STAR: Sqn Ldr Ashworth

Tributes to Burma hero

TRIBUTES HAVE been paid to World War II Hurricane pilot Sqn Ldr Jim Ashworth who has died at the age of 106.

Born in Canada, he volunteered for duty in 1939 and joined 20 Sqn in 1942, serving across India and Burma operating Lysanders before the squadron re-equipped with rocket-firing Hurricanes, targeting Japanese supply lines and artillery.

Speaking after the war, Jim said: "The Japanese were doing their best to shoot us down with their anti-aircraft guns and they often succeeded. One week we lost seven guys."

In 18 months he completed 54 combat missions in Burma before being sent home to Canada via the UK and New York.

Personnel from Boulmer-based 20 Sqn joined senior Royal Canadian Air Force representatives and members of Jim's family in his home town of Invermere, British Columbia, for a commemoration before a military ceremony at the local cenotaph.

20 Sqn's Wg Cdr Grant said: "Sqn Ldr Ashworth's skill, courage and dedication are attributes we will strive to emulate as we face an uncertain world in the years ahead; he, and his comrades, will not be forgotten."

Arrows trio take a bow



MOVING ON: (l-r) Sqn Ldr Muscat, Flt Lt Walker and Sqn Ldr Hansford

Andy Moreton

THE RED Arrows are saying farewell to three veteran display pilots as the team unveils its new line-up for the 2026 season.

Sqn Ldrs Tom Hansford and Graeme Muscat and Flt Lt Rich Walker are stepping down after three years delighting crowds worldwide with the famous display team.

The trio all took part in the Reds' milestone 60th anniversary tour last year and have performed at some of the UK's most high profile displays, broadcast to international audiences of millions.

Red 6 and synchro leader Sqn Ldr Hansford said: "My debut couldn't really get any bigger – it was a flypast over London for the Coronation of His Majesty The King. It's still hard to comprehend the number of people worldwide who watched that moment."

Also hanging up his red suit, after four seasons, is Sqn Ldr Graeme Muscat. In his final year as Red 10,



REDS DEBUT: (From left) Flt Lt Brighty, Sqn Ldr Roberts and Flt Lt Deen

he has supervised each display from the ground providing commentary to crowds at every show.

The unique role also involves flying Circus 10 alongside team photographers, capturing close-up images of the Arrows in action.

Sqn Ldr Muscat, who is moving on to train the next generation of frontline pilots, said: "The whole four years has been incredible from start to finish. In the air, it's

the photocasting that's been most memorable, capturing iconic images of flypasts over so many landmarks and cities.

"Having not joined the RAF as a pilot, I always say to those looking for advice to never give up on your dream. The best part of my role has been the opportunity to meet so many people."

Oxford-born Flt Lt Walker is leaving after three seasons – flying

initially as Red 2 and then Red 8 over the last two years.

He said: "After a varied career, I wanted to fly probably the most demanding military pure flying discipline and hopefully inspire other youngsters to consider a career in the RAF."

Stepping into the Reds' hotseats are Flt Lt Matt Brighty, Sqn Ldr Stu Roberts and Flt Lt Christopher Deen.

New Red 10 pilot Sqn Ldr Roberts said: "I'm acutely aware I've got big shoes to fill after my predecessor's sterling four years as the familiar voice of the display."

Red 2 Flt Lt Brighty joined the RAF in 2007. He added: "I went to airshows as a child and, of course, the Reds were always the highlight of the show."

Completing the 2026 line-up is Flt Lt Deen. He said: "Being involved in prestigious events will be an honour. It's been great fun getting back into the cockpit of such a simple jet."

Kidz scoop double win

MILITARY CHILDREN'S charity RAFAKidz netted two titles at the recent National Nursery Awards.

The group, which operates the scheme at every RAF station across the UK, was named as Medium Nursery Group of the Year while the Medmenham branch scooped the Outdoor Learning award.

The National NMT award wins come after RAFAKidz was named Nursery Group of the Year at the Nursery World



Awards back in September.

RAFA chief Nick Bunting said: "Winning one national award is a huge achievement; winning two in the same year is something truly special. It is a testament to the quality, warmth, and dedication that define RAFAKidz."

Thanks a million

Staff Reporter

CONINGSBY CIVVY Brooke Williamson is stepping up for charity to help the 1.25 million Brits with eating disorders.

The medical receptionist is hoping to complete 1.25 million steps and raise funds for support group Beat, which helped her recover from her own problem after suffering for more than a decade.

She's clocking up the miles walking her two dogs – and even has an under-desk treadmill at her workstation so she can continue her challenge during work hours.

Brooke, whose brother and partner

both serve at the station, said: "I had some quad pain early on but I'm determined to complete the 1.25 million steps."

"I really hope this will encourage others struggling with eating disorders to feel empowered to seek support and break down the stigma."

Coningsby medic Wg Cdr Emma Roe added: "Brooke's determination to support Beat's vital work shows exactly the kind of spirit we value at Coningsby. I hope her openness will encourage anyone struggling to reach out for the help they need."





The RAF Photographic C

People



ENJOY THE LITTLE THINGS: AS1 Dilworth

Individual Portfolio



BLINK AND YOU MISS IT: AS1 Mayall

From F-35 L
the Reds, cap
many sides o

IMAGES OF life in the RAF across the world are among the winners in this year's photo competition. From frontline operations to exercises at home and Red Arrows deployments flying the flag across the world, stills and video cameramen and women have been skilfully capturing all aspects of life in uniform. And as well as the traditional aircraft, equipment, operations and set-piece pictures, the Service's snappers have also highlighted portrayals of what personnel get up to in their spare time. The sports winner is a dramatic portrayal of an Air Force parachutist, while the famous Falkland Islands penguins make an appearance in the features section.

Amateur



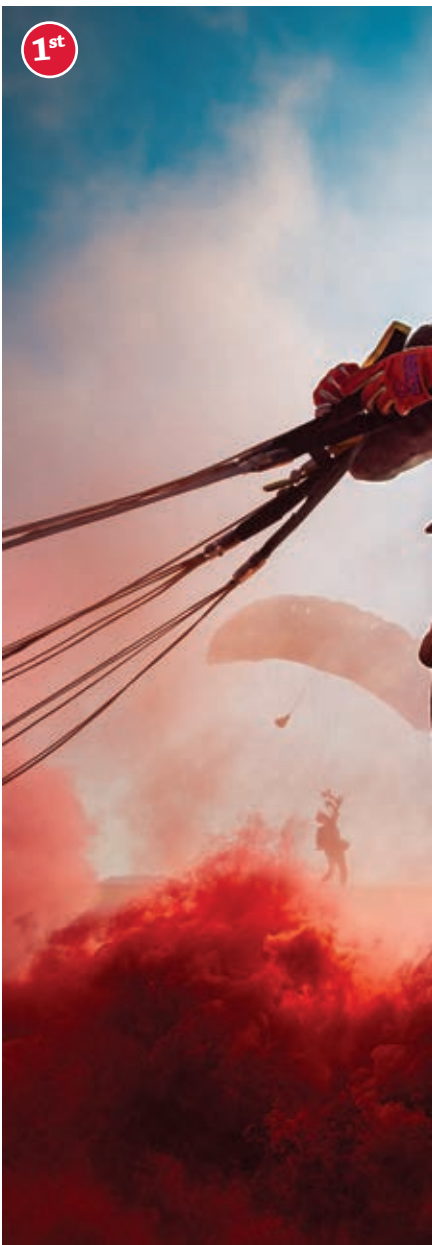
UNTITLED: Billy Roberts

Student



CPL WARBURTON: AR Hambrook

RAF Sports



DROP ZONE: AS1 Allison

RAF Feature – The Falkland Islands Tour



P-P-PICK UP A PENGUIN: Cpl Roberts

ANTARCTIC VOYAGE: Cpl Roberts

Competition Winners 2025



Lightning to capturing the of Service life

Things are brought right up to date with a superb F-35 Lightning fighter picture as winner of the amateur category.
The competition aims to honour both individuals and sections, professionals and those taking photographers for a hobby, whose output often goes unseen.
Entries are judged by industry experts, apart from the yet-to-be announced people's choice, and the winners will take a bow at a glittering ceremony at Bentley Priory.

See the next edition of *RAF News* to discover which photograph has been chosen by the public as their favourite shot. Frontrunners at this stage include a mover on the ramp of a Chinook and a Puma over London.



RAF Equipment



PIT STOP: Cpl Roberts

Technical and Engineering



UNDERNEATH: AS1 Evans

Ops & Exercises



WHEN IN ROME: AS1 Lewis

Video



CHASING THE RED ARROWS: AS1 Lewis

Section – RAF Aerobatic Team (Red Arrows)



FLYING THE FLAG: Cpl Dye



OVER THE RAINBOW: AS1 Lewis



THE MUSIC OF

John Williams

'IN CONCERT'

Lincoln Cathedral

Band of the Royal Air Force College

Compere Melvyn Prior

7.30pm Saturday 16 May 2026



www.rafconcerts.uk

Save an Icon: Vulcan to the Sky Trust launches urgent appeal

The clock is ticking for one of Britain's most iconic aircraft. Can a beloved Cold War giant be saved before it's too late?

AT THE heart of British aviation history sits a legend: the Avro Vulcan XH558. Once a guardian of the skies during the Cold War, this magnificent aircraft now faces an uncertain future on the ground in Doncaster. Last month, the Vulcan to the Sky Trust (VTST) launched a critical fundraising appeal in a last-ditch effort to safeguard the aircraft for generations to come.

"This is not the message we wanted to be putting out in 2025," said Marc Walters, CEO of VTST, "but the reality is that Vulcan XH558 needs urgent support."

A Legacy Under Threat

Since being forced to vacate Hangar 3 at Doncaster Sheffield Airport in 2017, the Trust has weathered a storm of setbacks. From the loss of vital event revenue and merchandise sales to the halting of popular engine ground runs, VTST has faced significant financial pressures. The pandemic only intensified the challenges.

"The complete loss of evening events, shop revenue, the pause in tours, and the devastating impact of the pandemic has

tested our resilience. More recently, the halt of XH558's popular engine ground runs have compounded the issues we have faced and placed enormous strain on the charity's finances," Marc explained.

Despite these challenges, a dedicated team of volunteers has kept the Vulcan in pristine condition, so thousands of XH558's supporters can visit the aircraft. The charity has also continued a proud programme of education and outreach activities with Vulcan XH558 as the centrepiece. VTST's education programme has already inspired thousands of students across Yorkshire and Humber, bringing aviation and engineering to life for the next generation.

A New Hope: The Vulcan Experience

Now, a glimmer of hope has emerged. A recent decision by the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority to grant up to £160 million in gainshare funding to the City of Doncaster Council has set the stage for a full-scale revival of Doncaster Sheffield Airport.

In tandem, the newly-established FlyDoncaster Ltd,



APPEAL: Marc Walters, CEO the Vulcan to the Sky Trust with XH558

a 100 per cent council-owned company that will manage the airport, has identified a promising site for what could be XH558's future home: The Vulcan Experience.

Planned as a world-class visitor attraction, The Vulcan Experience will celebrate not just the RAF and the Cold War era, but also the technological marvel that is the Avro Vulcan. At its heart: XH558, displayed in all her glory.

But that's not all. The site will also house a Green Technology Hub, showcasing the future of sustainable aviation. VTST aims to ignite a passion for innovation among young people and open up new avenues in STEM education.

"Most importantly," said Marc, "it will allow us to expand our education programme and inspire the next generation of engineers and aviators. But before we can even think about breaking ground, we need your help. We now need interim funding just to keep going, to maintain the aircraft and pursue the next stage of this dream."

Marc continued: "The Trust has launched an urgent fundraising appeal, with plans to resume the popular engine runs, an event that not only generates vital income but also serves as essential exercise for XH558's engines. Positive discussions are



FINAL FLIGHT: XH558 above Yorkshire in 2015 © Michelle Middleton Photography

underway with FlyDoncaster, and there is cautious optimism that these iconic events could return in 2026."

A Call to Action

The Trust is clear: without public support, the future of Vulcan XH558 is at serious risk. And time is running out.

Air Cdre Edward Jarron, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, urged aviation enthusiasts and the public alike to act now. "Every donation, no matter the size, brings us closer to securing the future of Vulcan XH558. Together, we can ensure she remains an iconic symbol of

British innovation and resilience, and a source of inspiration for generations to come," he said.

How You Can Help

This is more than a call for donations. It's a rallying cry to preserve a unique piece of British history. To ensure that the very last Vulcan bomber ever to fly – the last all-British designed and built four-engine aircraft to fly – continues to tell her story, not from history books, but in person, where visitors can see and feel her legacy.

● Go to vulcantothesky.org to donate or learn more.

Richard Clarke, VTST



HEAVYWEIGHT BACKING: Defence Secretary John Healey (left) in XH558 with VTST's Air Cdre (Ret'd) Edward Jarron on a visit to Doncaster Sheffield Airport last summer

There when you need her



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ready but is your
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Lady Grover

Armed Forces' Health Support

The real-life bravery of comic book hero Warrant Officer Norman Jackson VC, who crawled along the wing of his burning Lancaster at 20,000ft to tackle a fuel tank inferno

Beyond the call of *Duty*



TO THE VICTOR, THE SPOILS: Norman's story immortalised in a popular children's comic in 1961



MEMORIES: Norman Jackson sits inside a Lancaster bomber once more in later life

WARRANT OFFICER Norman Jackson's immense bravery when his Lancaster bomber was hit by a night fighter led to him being awarded the Victoria Cross. His action has been described by Lord Ashcroft, holder of the world's largest collection of VCs, as "...arguably the greatest single act of gallantry in the entire history of the VC."

Norman served in 106 Squadron as a flight engineer. On what was supposed to be the penultimate operation of his first tour, his aircraft was hit by cannon shells and a fuel tank was set on fire.

Incredibly, Norman had

considered the possibility of this happening and had formulated a plan. He climbed out of the cockpit escape hatch and made his way along the wing where, when close enough to the burning fuel leak, he attempted to extinguish it.

Now Norman's son David has written the definitive account of his father's amazing courage, in *Duty* (bombercommandbooks.com), Norman's authorised biography.

David said: "Many articles have been published about my father in the past. Without exception these accounts either contain inaccuracies or are not the full story. I believe my



IN GOOD COMPANY: Norman (above right, and below as a young airman) at his VC investiture with fellow VC, Gp Capt Leonard Cheshire

book details, for the first time, what actually happened on the night of April 26-27, 1944 above Schweinfurt."

Duty explains in detail how and why Norman carried out such a brave deed, in the context of his RAF service during World War II.

The author added: "The book is also about the courageous young airmen that my father served with in Bomber Command and their lack of recognition at the end of the war for their service and sacrifice. They were mostly volunteer members of the Royal Air Force: carpenters, engineers, schoolteachers, plumbers, bank clerks, managers, just ordinary people who answered the call to defend their country in its hour of greatest need."

Norman was 25 years old when he made his heroic effort, which took place at 200 miles an hour and at around 20,000 feet.

"In his debrief Norman said nothing about the incident"

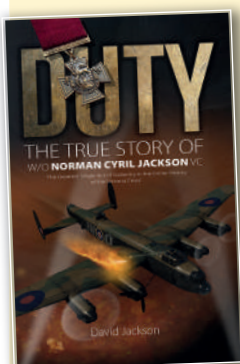
David explained that, after the war... "all he [Norman] wanted to do was move forward with his life; what happened in the past should stay in the past. He had been hospitalised for 10 long months because of this action and, as had his crewmates, spent time in a prisoner of war camp... He stressed that he had only been doing his job and his duty...As far as he was concerned, acts of so-called heroism had happened every day during the war, and he was genuinely embarrassed by all the attention."

He added: "According to Squadron records, the story of



my father's heroism was revealed when the surviving members of the crew were debriefed as normal when returning from captivity, and all gave the same account. The records disclose that in his own debrief Norman said absolutely nothing about the incident."

Win a copy of the book



WE HAVE a copy of *Duty* (rrp £26) up for grabs. For your chance to win it, tell us:

How old was Norman Jackson when he made the brave action for which he was awarded the VC?

Email your answer, marked **Duty 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 December 12.

Win!



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Letters

Royal Air Force engineers keep wheels turning

ROYAL AIR Force Engineering – Keeping the Wheels Turning.

- The Air Specialist oils the wheels.
- Corporals ensure that the precise oil is used and it is applied correctly.
- Sergeants ensure a ready supply of oil and that the documentation is correct.
- Chief Technicians check that the correct wheels are being oiled, plus check for wear and obsolescence.
- Flight Sergeants are responsible for the long-term maintenance of the wheels and the discipline of the team.
- Warrant Officers make sure that there is a long-term supply of wheels and the personnel to maintain them, plus they prevent officers from interfering with this long-established wheel-oiling process.

John Lewis
ex-C1944575

NOVEMBER 9, 2025 marks 36 years since the Berlin Wall came down, effectively ending the Cold War, followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the Cold War I served at RAF Gütersloh, as an armourer for eight years. In that time, my first wife and I became friendly with Eva and her daughter Andrea.

We decided to remain in West Germany following the end of my 24 years in the RAF. Our daughter Rebecca was already in primary school with Andrea as a classmate and they quickly became friends.

Eva told us that she was originally from East Germany, and had escaped with her daughter, when a baby, to West Germany. Her parents still lived in the DDR. Eva was persona non grata there and it would have been dangerous for her to return.

My military mind immediately shot into security mode. I was more than aware of the personal implications, as a serving member of a Nato force. We were often warned about East German "sleepers" living in West Germany, acting as the eyes and ears for the Stasi. My RAF service ended in 1980, although Eva never asked me anything

Friendship transcended politics of the Cold War



EAST GERMAN PALS: Andrea with her grandfather and, right, her mother Eva

about my military work, while Andrea and Rebecca's friendship continued to grow.

In 1981 the East German authorities granted Eva's mother a 30-day exit visa to visit her daughter and granddaughter in West Germany. Her husband was not allowed to accompany her, which ensured she would return when her visa expired.

Eva's mother knew she would

be visiting an English family and brought a small earthenware jug (which I still have) and a bar of East German chocolate as small gifts. She was in total awe at the way we lived, having lived all her life in the DDR after World War II ended. Shortly before her visa expired, she travelled home to East Germany.

In 1982 Eva and Andrea returned to West Berlin to be

nearer her parents, still being a child Andrea was allowed into the DDR to visit her grandparents. It was a sad farewell and we missed them a lot. In 1984, I put Becky on a plane to West Berlin for a holiday with Eva and Andrea. While she was there they almost caused an incident. Travelling on the underground Andrea realised they were at Checkpoint Charlie when she spotted the East German border soldiers. They quickly exited the train!

Once East and West Germany became one country again, things changed rapidly and we lost contact with each other. I will never forget the bond of two children transcending the politics that divided many families in East and West Germany, to create the friendship they had during the Cold War.

Alan Mudge
Pentney
King's Lynn

Competition

The story of Bomber Boy Albert

WHEN SGT Albert A. Walton joined Bomber Command, he could never have imagined the extraordinary journey that lay ahead – from training flights

over England's flat farmland to the heart of Hitler's Berlin, and finally to captivity in a German prisoner of war camp.

Written by Albert's own family, using wartime letter extracts, operational records, newly-discovered photographs and documents, *From Bomber County to Berlin* brings to life the human story behind the Lancaster bomber crews who faced unimaginable odds.

Flying on one of the RAF's most secret missions over Berlin, Albert faced near-impossible odds. Shot down during a night raid, he parachuted from his stricken Lancaster into enemy territory. After narrowly surviving the descent, he was captured and imprisoned.

101 Squadron

The book traces the experiences of a young crew within 101 Squadron, their sorties, two aircraft crashes, including that final mission when their Lancaster was shot down on flight DV269 on January 2, 1944. Wireless operator/gunner Albert was lucky – he was one of four crew members to survive that fateful night. Tragically, another four crew members were lost.

Sixteen months as a prisoner of war followed, with solitary confinement at Dulag Luft Frankfurt before being sent to

Win a copy of the book



YOU COULD win a copy of the book, for your chance to own one, answer this question correctly:

Which squadron was Sgt Watson flying with when his Lancaster bomber was shot down in January 1944?

Win!

Email your answer, marked From Bomber Country to Berlin book competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by December 12. Please include your full postal address with your entry.



SGT ALBERT A. WALTON: Survived 16 months as a prisoner of war

Stalag IV-B until liberation came.

Richly illustrated and meticulously researched, this moving first-hand account reveals the courage and endurance of one ordinary man caught up in the extraordinary events of World War II.

Authors Ingrid Shepherd and Dawn Woodward have dedicated the book to Albert and his fellow crew members. They were: Sgt Charles Lindsay (flight engineer), Sgt Charles 'Derek' Brown (special operations wireless operator), Flt Off Weston Craig (navigator), Flt

Lt Alan Lonsdale Lazenby DFC (pilot), Flt Off James McClure (bomb aimer, RCAF), Sgt Gerald Alfred Beckett (air gunner, RCAF) and Sgt Donald Henry (Donnie) Stephens (rear gunner).

Flt Lt Lazenby, Sgt Stephens, Sgt Beckett and Sgt Brown were all killed.

Albert went on to marry Lily and the couple had three children. The Waltons celebrated their golden wedding anniversary and had nine grandchildren. Albert passed away in February 1996, tending to his beloved garden.



Affluent get to personalise every detail of their new 'Bond mobile'



CUTTING-EDGE: Aston Martin factory in Gaydon, Warwick, appears to have a moat at its front

BUYING A new car is more than just a purchase, it's an experience. Choosing the colour, the trim, the engine and the gearbox are all standard options but, when it comes to high-end vehicles, things move to a whole new level.

Take Aston Martin, a manufacturer that produces cars fit for a king. It's a British icon that's loved by royalty, celebrities and the film industry alike, because its cars have immense character. We're talking about charisma here that goes beyond the supercar 'wow' factor.

Aston has an image that has frequently seen its cars cast as the Q Branch hero of the Bond films and, believe it or not, vehicles that have been designed by Aston's in-house bespoke customisation service are even marked Q.

Machine guns and heat-seeking missiles may not be on the options list, but it doesn't stretch the imagination too much to believe that Q could have a workshop secretly squirrelled away behind a false wall somewhere within the factory.

Every car that comes off the production line is handbuilt by craftsmen and craftswomen to exact detail and no two cars are the same. I was recently invited to the factory to see the process first-hand.

Bond

Let me set the scene for you. You arrive at the main entrance and park up next to a range of Astons, gleaming in Plasma Blue, Storm Purple and Silver Birch. Cross the moat, yes the factory looks like it has a moat, and you enter the main showroom. This is where you start wandering around aimlessly, like a big kid in a sweet shop.

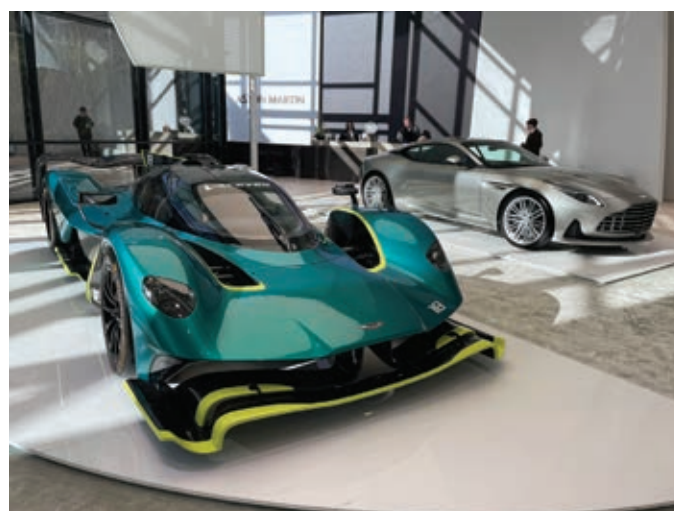
To your right you see the DB12, Goldfinger Edition, a car created to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the James Bond film, of the same name. It is a thing of true beauty, with gold-finished buttons and the classic paint code from the original Bond DB5. This is a car that develops 680PS and is powered by a twin-turbo-charged V8. You can't help but admire it.

Also in the room, you'll find a Valhalla and a Valkyrie.



ICONIC: DB12, Goldfinger Edition

Rich pickings



MORE HP THAN HEINZ: Aston Martin Valkyrie (above, left) produces an enormous 1160HP – nine or 10 times that of a standard family motor. Left, new owners get to select every detail, down to the colour of the seat stitching

Stunning machines that push the boundaries of automotive engineering. The Valkyrie, with its magnificent V12, produces 1160HP! The Valhalla ignites the imagination with its mid-engine, F1-inspired, PHEV powertrain. It's a machine that achieves 217mph.

Stitching

This showroom is the stuff of dreams, but it gets better. You're soon led into a side room, where

you can choose every detail of your new car. Model, engine, gearbox, paint, upholstery, trim, even the material that your Aston badge is fashioned from can be specified. As you make your choices, your masterpiece takes shape on a large digital display. Then, when you've selected every detail, down to the colour of the stitching on your seats, Aston will start building your car.

We enter the factory floor with our expert guide. We're led

past the latest models on display and head for the upholstery cutting area. Here, the hides, or faux hides, that have been chosen by the customer are dyed to the exact colour chosen and stretched to dry. They are then cut to fit the templates and stitched precisely to fit the components.

Unique

Moving on, we see the bare shells of the cars starting the production line. This is where

it really starts. Shells, engines, gearboxes, wiring looms, steering racks, every component labelled with the unique build number that identifies the client's car.

We walk further down the line and see cars taking shape. Doors, seats, wheels, lights – each component carefully added by specialist fitters. Finally, we reach the part of the line where each car is started and components are tested. Horns beep, lights flash and in-car entertainment systems are powered up for the first time. This is where customers' dreams come to life.

Masterpiece

It is an amazing experience, visiting the factory and seeing the production process. At one end of the line, boxes of components, at the other complete cars are driven off. Buyers get to check on the build process of their car as it progresses and it is like watching a masterpiece take shape.

Not everyone can afford to buy a new Aston Martin, but a glimpse inside the factory helps you to understand why those who can do. It also makes something very clear for the second-hand market. Take your time searching for your dream car, because each one is unique.

Sport



Peak perfection as Kallenberg takes Snowdon

RAF athlete claims top spot after 10 years of trying

Staff Reporter

AFTER 10 years of chasing the win, RAF Wittering's Flt Lt Michael Kallenberg has finally claimed the top spot at the Snowdon Marathon.

Crossing the finish line in the fantastic time of 2:33:54, the victory comes after two previous runner-up finishes, in 2015 and 2024, marking a long-awaited and hard-earned moment of triumph for the seasoned Air Force athlete.

The Snowdon Marathon,

renowned for its gruelling terrain and unpredictable weather, lived up to its reputation this year.

Runners faced 2,500 feet of climbing over the 26.2-mile course, battling through hail, rain and fierce winds that tested even the most experienced competitors.

Despite the brutal conditions, Kallenberg delivered a masterclass in endurance and strategy, pulling away in the final miles to secure victory by approximately two minutes.



FLOWER POWER: Mike lifts trophy, and bouquet, aloft

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

Axe fired up for return

FIGHTING MAN:
Brad battles fires
for RAF and ring
opponents as a
professional boxer

BOXING

Daniel Abrahams

RAF PROFESSIONAL boxer and firefighting instructor Brad Axe is hoping to extinguish his opponent's challenge when he returns to the ring after a seven-month hiatus.

"I am going to be meeting fire with fire," the Air Force corporal told *RAF News*.

Axe will fight in Bristol against middleweight opponent Steven Davis, after his planned summer contest against Farley Collinson was cancelled when the aviator received a cut during his training camp.

Axe said: "I was a bit unlucky with the cut. There isn't much you can do. If you put a body shot in, your opponent's head comes forward, which is what happened.

"This fight is all been about resetting. I took September off, relaxed with my family, did some training and went into October hungry again.

"The Davis fight is closer to home. I am looking forward to it and to having some of my local supporters there."

Of his opponent, Axe said: "The guy is a scrapper. I am going to meet fire with fire and to use my power, which I feel will be too much for him.

"Once the fight is over, I'm taking some time for the arrival of my new baby, and then next year, March time, I will begin looking to fight on the domestic route, to face a Southern title holder."

For now, Axe is looking to produce some late November fireworks at Underground at the Galleries, Bristol.

● Follow Axe on Facebook @brad.axe.7.

Try-fest for Under-23s as they leave Navy all at sea



BIG CONTRIBUTION: AS1 Kieran Jenkins brought home 17 points, including a try

RUGBY

THE RAF'S Under-23 rugby union stars fired a stunning opening Inter-Services salvo as they crushed current champions the Royal Navy, 42-14 in Stourbridge.

The win, which saw six different try scorers, was described by head coach Wg Cdr John Neville as 'outstanding'.

He added: "We executed our game plan superbly, everybody brought a fantastic energy, on the field and off the bench when they came on.

"We spoke at half-time about remaining calm and sticking to the game plan and the things that worked well for us in the first half. Although this was extensively a new team with 15 new caps, we benefitted from the experience of players such as AS1 Kieran Jenkins and our captain AS1 Will Lewellyn, who have both played at senior level."

The game began with a blow for the light blues, who saw AS1 Jay Smith's opening try disallowed for a forward pass, before they opened the scoring with a penalty kick. That was quickly outscored by the Navy, who ran

RAF U23s	42
Navy U23s	14

in the first try through Elliott.

The aviators were not to be cowed and within minutes Smith got his just reward, touching down on the Navy left.

A kick saw the score hit 13-7 as the Navy began to wobble as Jenkins danced his way through the gaps in the RN defence to score over the whitewash.

A Navy try just before the break seemed harsh on the aviators, who led 20-14, but they bounced back through AS1 Rob

Toner, scoring with seconds to go before half-time, meaning they went in 27-14 up at the break.

A stuttering start to the second period saw the RAF unable to add to the scoreline until the final 20 minutes. With the Navy all at sea, substitute AS1 George Balbro touched down and with less than 10 minutes left a further two tries from AS1 Brad Aven and AS1(T) Freddie Richardson and the boot of Jenkins – who scored 17 points in total, saw the game won at 42-14.

The championship's final clash will see the RAF face the Army on December 5 at Cardiff Arms Park.



TRY TIME: AS1 Jay
Smith goes over
PHOTOS: MAX ROSS

SAILING

Bright Sparks Rock the boat with Silver Fleet Trophy victory

**Staff Reporter**

RAF GIBRALTAR'S Flt Lt Owen Sparks and Sgt Arron Gaskin returned to the Rock with the Silver Fleet Trophy.

The members of the United Services Sailing Club at Four Corners were victorious at the Brady Sailing Championships at Rutland Water.

Competing in the double-handed RS (ex-Laser) 2000 boat, Sparks and Gaskin were up against a fleet of 14 boats in eight races across two days. Day one started with light winds and after the initial regatta briefing to all crews the start was delayed until forecasted stronger winds moved in.

Racing eventually got underway in 4-8 knots of breeze – not ideal conditions for the Gibraltar crew who are used to stiffer winds in the Strait. None the less, they managed a respectable 7th, 8th, 8th and 5th across the four races for the day – placing them in seventh overall going into day two and putting them at the top of the 'silver fleet'.

Gusty

The start of day two brought a stronger breeze, in the region of 15-20 knots, and much more suited the Gibraltar sailors, who have been conditioned to the gusty Levante winds in the bay.

Their ability in the stronger wind was evident, with the pair placing 3rd and 4th in the two races before lunch. Climbing up the leader board, the pressure was on to sail well in the afternoon session and continue the morning's form. Gaining a respectable sixth place in the first race after lunch, only one race remained.

The RAF Gibraltar team got off to a strong start and rounded the top mark in third position and then misfortune struck. A disastrous course change saw them capsize and they could only watch as the rest of the fleet sailed away into the distance.

Despite the disappointing end to the last race of the regatta, the pair had done enough to win the Silver Fleet trophy for 2025.

Now back on the Rock and out on the Mediterranean, training begins in earnest for the 2026 season.

● If anyone would like to get involved with Dinghy sailing in Gibraltar, search for United Services Sailing Club on Facebook.

Sport

FOOTBALL

Germans lose... on penalties

First UKAF win is one to savour

Daniel Abrahams

IT WAS a night not to be forgotten as UKAF men's footballers beat the German Bundeswehr for the first time in their Remembrance fixture... and on penalties.

Team captain Sgt Mike Campbell, who netted the opener, said: "Having been involved with UKAF since 2016, I was incredibly proud to lead the team out at Bracknell Town FC. In recent years we've struggled to overcome the Germans in this fixture, so it felt rather fitting that we did so on penalties.

"This season has brought significant change to the UKAF side, with new backroom staff and nine debutants, but the professionalism and ambition remain unwavering. I'm proud to have played my part in that journey."

Campbell was one of five RAF players selected in a starting line-up also including Flt Lt Aaron Eyett, AS1 Josh Storey-Randell, Cpl George Bishop and Cpl Joe Spalding. It was an Air Force one, two, three for the opening goal as Randall stood a cross up from the left and Eyett's nod back across goal was turned in by Campbell.

The aviator's early score was cancelled out by Germany's Lucas Meyer as the 90 minutes ended in a 1-1 draw, but a thrilling shoot-out went UKAF's way.

Royal Navy shot-stopper Laurence McCormick was the penalty hero for the hosts, saving three before the Army's Jack Barber stepped up to slot away the winning strike.

UKAF came into the game after a disappointing Kentish Cup, which saw France take the trophy, as well as knowing they'd failed to score against the Germans in a 1-0 defeat last year and a 0-0 draw in 2023.

UKAF had chances in the first half to further their lead, with Randell denied by a good save from German goalkeeper Andre Zott.

The second half saw a change in formation from the visitors and they went on to dominate the tempo of the game, with the equaliser a fair reflection of the 90 minutes.

So it was to the dreaded penalties to decide the match, and after four perfect efforts, spectators witnessed a flurry of missed or saved strikes as UKAF sealed the win.



POPPY PRIDE: UKAF Men after their shootout triumph against the old enemy

Skipper's Cat who got the cream



CHEER WE GO: UKAF Women celebrate their impressive victory against the German armed forces

IT WAS third time lucky for UKAF women's footballers as they stormed to a 3-1 Remembrance fixture win over the German Bundeswehr at Bracknell Town FC.

A first-half penalty from skipper Sgt Cat Beaver and two second-half goals from Navy stars PO Rosie McDonnell and LT Nat Bavister were enough to avenge last year's 1-0 loss and a 1-1 draw in 2023.

This sets up UKAF manager FS Karl Milgate's charge on the road to an unbeaten 2025. He said: "In the first half we were excellent, probably our best 45 minutes of football since we started working together – we were relentless. We set out a plan to test them and we needed bravery, which we have in abundance.

"We beat the Dutch to win the President's Cup in May, now this, so if we beat the Irish Defence Forces in December, we go unbeaten throughout the year."

The Germans defended well throughout but spent most of the first period camped in their own half, only breaking out to score the second-half strike through Vanessa Hannig.

Milgate added: "We are competitive, challenge our players and approach our opponents with an aggressive mindset. Our opponents find it difficult to contain us – so we're disappointed to not be two or three up at the break, which affected us in the early part of the second half, but we

UKAF Women	3
Bundeswehr Women	1

weathered the storm and returned to our high standards. Their goal inspired us to take back momentum."

Within 10 minutes of the restart, PO McDonnell met AS1(T) Hayes's cross to put the ball into the net, before the Germans began to fight back with Hannig scoring.

“Our opponents find it difficult to contain us”

But a mistake from the Germans opened the door for Bavister to clip the ball over the German keeper to score UKAF's third goal of the game.

Milgate added: "We now focus on playing the Irish Defence Forces in December, so off to Dublin to shoot for a 100 per cent record for 2025 and to continue our 100 per cent record against the Irish.

"We want to achieve that and then we turn attention in 2026 to retaining the President's Cup when we host the Netherlands CS, but for now, all focus is on Dublin."

5 RAF Sport

pages of

GRIDIRON

The slay of the Jackal

Mustangs tame the Army to claim gridiron Inters title

Staff Reporter

RAF MUSTANGS overcame a spirited Army side to win the gridiron Inter-Services crown.

The teams clashed in a fast-paced, high-stakes contest that kept fans on the edge of their seats until the final play.

The game at Tilsley Park in Abingdon began explosively. On the Army's very first snap, disaster struck: a fumbled ball was recovered by the Mustangs' defence on the

RAF Mustangs	20
Army Jackals	14



Army seven-yard line. Capitalising immediately, the RAF offence capitalised the turnover into a touchdown. A completed pass from Cpl James Turner to Cpl Lewis Truman and a strong run saw the first score on the board.

With the extra point



OFFENCE: Mustangs on the front foot
PHOTOS: TONY SMALL

good, the Mustangs jumped to an early 7-0 lead. From there, the RAF showcased their balance of offence and defence. Quarterback Turner orchestrated a series of crisp drives, mixing precise throws with well-timed scrambles. One standout moment saw him launch a deep bomb to the Army two-yard line, taking a hit but demonstrating courage and skill under pressure. The Mustangs converted the opportunity into another touchdown with Turner connecting with upcoming star AS1(T) Elliott Knight, extending the lead to 14-0.

The defensive unit added their own heroics with key interceptions, including crucial picks by Cpl Dan Walkinshaw and Cpl Dylan Walsh.

The Jackals fought back in the first half, advancing into RAF territory. However, penalties and stout defensive stands disrupted their progress, but they managed to get into the endzone. The two-point conversion attempt was stopped, keeping the score at 14-6 as the teams headed for the half-time break.



CELEBRATIONS: Mustangs players embrace after hard-fought title victory

The second half began with a flash of brilliance. A kick-off return of nearly 55 yards set up a great field position, once again Turner was able to connect with Knight for a touchdown.

Despite the Army's renewed efforts, the RAF defence remained resolute. Interceptions, defensive tackles for loss and timely stops forced turnovers on downs, frustrating Army drives.

As the clock ticked down, the Jackals mounted a late surge, scoring a touchdown to narrow the gap to 20-14, but the Mustangs held on to regain the championship title.

Flt Lt scales new heights to take win at Snowdon

See page 23



Mustangs General Manager Chf Tech Paul Wakeford told RAF News: "This team should be immensely proud of its achievements. Winning two of the first three Inter-Service Championships is a powerful testament to what the Royal Air Force is capable of."

"To come back from last year's defeat, regroup, and deliver such performances speaks volumes about the resilience and determination within this squad. The commitment shown by the committee, coaches and players alike has been nothing short of exceptional."

READY FOR CIVVY STREET?

**You've grafted.
You've pushed yourself.
You've got the job done.**

**But stepping
into civvy life?
Not everyone's
got a plan for it.**

**HLP for
HEROES**

**Help for Heroes is here for
anyone who's worn the uniform**
and your family, whatever challenges you might face.

helpforheroes.org.uk/get-help



SCAN ME

R'n'R

Joy and wonder – festive fun with James B Partridge

● See
page 3



Win!



Win sci-fi celebration
on DVD ● p8

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

BREW+
BAKE!



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

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



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

R'n'R



Music

The Big Christmas Assembly Festive tour

JAMES B PARTRIDGE has been dubbed the UK's favourite music teacher and his The Big Christmas Assembly tour is now under way.

The festive tour travels around the country until December 22 and is described as the perfect blend of holiday cheer and primary school memories, making a great night out with friends and family.

James said: "I've always loved how the songs we sang as children at Christmas time brought so much joy and excitement. My show is a celebration of those songs and the fun we had, whether it was singing in assemblies or practising for the Christmas nativity."

What began as a few playful social media videos of James performing iconic school songs for his students quickly turned into a nationwide sensation and sparked the creation of Primary School Assembly Bangers. Since early 2023, James has brought this live school assembly experience to stages nationwide and his show

was one of the viral moments at this year's Glastonbury Festival.

Talking about The Big Christmas Assembly 2025, he explained: "Each venue definitely has its own vibe. This tour is my biggest yet in terms of capacity and I love that the show works in such a wide range of spaces."

"I've performed in arts centre, converted churches, comedy clubs – even a cocktail bar in Soho, which is where this whole idea started. It's amazing how flexible it is."

He added: "My Christmas singing memories come from two places: school and church. I grew up going to my local carol service. For me, church was as much about community as it was about religion."

"Some of my best childhood memories are of singing in the school choir, going around care homes at Christmas, or being part of the big carol service. I'm trying to recreate that magic now: that feeling of joy and togetherness that comes from communal singing. That's what

...and a Partridge in a pear tree



THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS: James B Partridge's tour promises school days reminiscing and festive fun



The Big Christmas Assembly is all about – bringing back that sense of wonder."

In February and March 2026, he will be staging a small run of exclusive preview shows in Coventry, Gloucester, Barnstaple and Crewe for his Primary School

Bangers Preview tour.

James's journey has taken him from school classrooms to some of the UK's biggest stages. Highlights include performing with Gareth Malone's Voices at the Royal Variety Show and providing vocals for major artists

including Paul McCartney, The Rolling Stones and Electric Light Orchestra.

● For more information and full tour details go to: jamesbpartridge.com

Interview by Carl Marsh



Cinema

Odyssey (18)

On Blu-ray & DVD, Dec 8 and digital platforms Dec 22 (Dazzler Media)

Tash is chasing the cash



EDGY: Tash

A NORTH LONDON estate agent is in for the worst week of her life in Gerard Johnson's genre-bending thriller.

Tash Flynn (Polly Maberly) runs a small lettings agency under the motto "Live and let live" – though that doesn't stop her from openly ruling out potential renters by race. Her business looks stable on the surface, but the cracks are starting to show. She's doing the rounds, asking her creditors for a top-up and trying to keep things afloat for a potential merger that she insists isn't just a takeover. Tash is desperate to keep up appearances.

At work she's tough and to the point, but it's during property viewings that she really comes alive. She shows trainee Dylan (Jasmine Blackborow) the tricks of the trade: a garden isn't overgrown, it's "semi-rural." Tash is always on, her Bluetooth headset glued to her ear. The

days starting with yoga and ending with cocaine-fuelled online poker.

Odyssey does a great job of setting up this world and the abrasive woman at its centre. But it's not long before things take a darker turn. Tash brushes off talk of another lettings agent's disappearance, but it's clear this will come back to haunt her, all seeming to tie in with handsy moneylender Dan (Guy Burnet), who fancies himself as a bit of a gangster.

After spending so much time getting to know Tash and her money troubles, this plotline feels like it's from another world. It's comical and dark, but not set up with quite the same care. Still, Maberly holds it all together with a sharply realised performance and backed by a moody electronic score from The The.

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



Cinema

The Choral (12A)

In cinemas now

A chorus of disapproval

IN A small Yorkshire mill town in 1916, the local choral society is left leaderless when its chorus master is called to serve. A replacement is soon found: exceptionally talented but bound to ruffle some feathers.

Dr Guthrie (Ralph Fiennes, *Conclave*), an atheist who spent years in Germany before the war, is an unlikely choice and his appointment instantly has the town gossiping. Fully aware of the locals' suspicions, Guthrie insists that German society values artistic expression as more than mere social pastime, even dropping into German every now and then, just to needle the easily offended.

Directed by Nicholas Hytner and written by Alan Bennett, *The Choral* is a period drama laced with the pair's familiar mix of warmth and wit. As Guthrie takes charge of the depleted choir, with most of the men away fighting, he's forced to relax his high standards simply to fill out the ranks.

Among the new recruits are mill lads who see themselves as cannon fodder for the front but find unexpected purpose in singing. Their enthusiasm isn't hurt by the presence of several young women, including Salvation Army member Mary (Amara Okereke). A strangely bawdy streak of humour runs through these scenes, one

subplot playing like a wartime twist on a teen sex comedy as the boys aim to lose their virginity before going to war.

As the choir prepares to perform *The Dream of Gerontius*, the work takes on a moving new meaning, its religious themes reflecting the young lives soon to be lost. After spending so much time with the choir in rehearsal, it's a shame the final performance isn't given more space, though the story finds quiet resolution beyond the music.

The Choral gently explores art and community in a time of national uncertainty. Fiennes brings sharpness and humanity to Guthrie, while a strong supporting cast keeps the tone light and lively.

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



GERMANOPHILE: Wartime congregation distrusts Dr Guthrie (Fiennes)

R'n'R



Panto
Jack & the Beanstalk
Wycombe Swan Theatre

RADIO 2 Breakfast Show presenter Scott Mills stars in the High Wycombe Swan's family pantomime Jack and The Beanstalk, playing Mayor Mills in the panto for the third time.

What keeps bringing the much-loved DJ back?
"I have the panto bug and it's not going anywhere soon! I honestly just love it and now I can't imagine a Christmas without doing panto. It's become a huge part of the festive season for me," he said.
"When I made my debut, I was so nervous, it was like 'can I really do this?' but after two years in a bit of a 'learning bubble' I feel like I kind of know what I'm doing now, so I'm really looking forward to having even more fun with it. Because that's what it is... just brilliant fun!"
He added: "I'm really looking forward to the adrenaline buzz you get from going out live on stage. When the lights and music come up and you hear the audience taking their seats it's just next level. I'm also working with a whole new company and it's true, everyone says that your panto family become like family and they really do. I've made friends



BREAKFAST SHOW HOST:
DJ Scott Mills – and, left, in panto role. PHOTO CREDIT, right: BBC/Ray Burmiston

Mills & Boon...

Panto is the gift that keeps on giving for DJ Scott

for life and can't wait to make more."
Starring with Scott in the seasonal spectacular is singer/songwriter Mark Read from band A1, playing Jack – for his third consecutive year. And *Strictly Come Dancing* and panto supremo La Voix also stars, with comedian Matt Edwards.
Scott said he's used to performing in front of big live audiences as a DJ, but panto is a different kind of challenge.
He explained: "With DJ-

ing you're in your comfort zone, it's music and decks and you know exactly what you're doing. On stage in a panto, anything can happen – and usually does! That's the fun of it."
He's looking forward to performing with his fellow cast members, who he described as 'fantastic'.
"I've played plenty of Mark's songs on the radio before. Maybe I can learn some more panto tricks from the hilarious La Voix and perhaps she can learn some 'Strictly' tips from me (or maybe she's better off not doing that!) [he competed in the show back in 2014]. I am sure we are going to have the best laugh this year together on stage," he added.
Scott said that part of why he loves panto so much is because it's

such a great family tradition.
"It's so Christmassy. I grew up going to the panto, that feeling of heading into town, doing a bit of shopping, and then sitting down with your family to watch the show. It's magic. And the best bit is it's for everyone... with kids, parents, grandparents all enjoying it together. That's what makes it so special," he said.
"On stage it means long days and lots of hard work, but it also means laughing until your sides hurt, and seeing all those children's faces light up because you've become part of their Christmas? There's just no feeling like it."



Exhibitions
Spies, Lies and Deception
Until August 31, 2026
IWM North

The great feets of decep



HEROINE: Noor Inayat Khan.
PHOTOS: © IWM

THE BLOCKBUSTER exhibition *Spies, Lies and Deception* is now on at Imperial War Museums North.
Running until August 31, 2026, and showcasing more than 60 objects including gadgets, classified documents, art, film and photography, the free exhibition uncovers the secrets of extraordinary individuals who risked everything. From imaginary armies at D-Day to 1950s suburban spy rings and the recent growth of deep fake technology, *Spies, Lies and Deception* unravels stories from the battlefields of World War I through to the present day.
The exhibition in Manchester explores what happens when we are deceived and who pays the price. It is recommended for families and children 8+. Young recruits can visit the "Mission Room" to embark on a top secret exhibition trail, piecing together information to find out if they have what it takes to succeed in the world of spies.



BRIGHT SPARKS: Matches adapted for writing messages

Amanda Mason, lead curator of *Spies, Lies and Deception*, said: "Deception has always played a key role in conflict. Whether we view acts of deception as something good or bad depends on whether we are the deceiver or the deceived."
"Lives are lost when information falls into the wrong hands and lives are saved by people whose stories often remain hidden from history. By exploring some of the most surprising and daring

cases from the past hundred years, *Spies, Lies and Deception* is a must-see exhibition for anyone who is interested in finding out the truth behind this secretive world."
The specialist skills of writers, designers and creatives are essential to mastering the art of deception in conflict. Creative ingenuity on display includes a box of matches specially adapted for writing secret messages; papier-mâché heads used to identify the location of snipers in the World War I trenches; and decoy 'Sneakers' made by SOE (Special Operations Executive) in South-East Asia during World War II to disguise the wearer's real footprints.
The exhibition also pulls back the curtain to reveal the stories of some of the most fascinating spies, their experiences in the field and

Edited by Tracey Allen



'FAMILY': Scott with cast of Wycombe Swan's panto

Mark, below, said Jack is one of his favourite characters. He explained: "I love the story and I love a bit of thigh slapping which is very 'Jack'. He's such a down-to-earth character, and that's actually a bit like me!" "I'm actually surprised that I've not been put into a 'dad' role yet in panto, but I think it's only a matter of time – that or the villain, which I would love to do actually." "What I love is that our fans from back in the day may visit the panto and bring their kids." He added: "I love panto I think this will be coming up to my tenth. It doesn't feel like Christmas without it. But every year it's a bit

different, you work with a new company so it's always fresh and exciting." Mark and Scott have appeared together in panto twice before, first when Scott made his debut in Leicester and again last year. "We have such a great time and have become a bit like a panto family, so I'm really pleased to be back on stage with him again this year," Mark said. "But I've not worked with La Voix... I have a feeling it's going to be a lot of fun having her as my mum this year, I've watched her on *Strictly* and am looking forward to some of those witty ad-libs being thrown my way." Jack and the Beanstalk is at the Wycombe Swan from December 12 to January 4, 2026. ● Go to: trafalgartickets.com for full ticket details.



Music

Space Station Earth
UK tour

'Experience' the Space Station

LAN ESHKERI'S *Space Station Earth* is described as a genre-defying audio-visual experience which offers the opportunity to see the world through the eyes of an astronaut.

A collaboration between the BAFTA and Emmy-nominated composer and the European Space Agency, *Space Station Earth* goes on a UK tour in 2026 after wowing audiences during a sold-out premiere at London's Royal Albert Hall in 2022. The live dates will kick off in Glasgow on May 28, 2026 and will include London, Birmingham and Manchester.

It is an immersive event performed by a synth-pop band, an orchestra and a choir with huge screen, high-definition footage filmed by astronauts from the International Space Station. The show takes audiences on the moving journey of astronauts travelling to the space station – a journey astronauts find hard to describe. The live events promise to offer the opportunity to capture the feeling of The Overview Effect: the profound awe astronauts feel when viewing the Earth from orbit.

The concept was inspired by Eshkeri's friendship with astronaut and former military pilot Tim Peake, who is a fan of his music and praised the show's ability "to capture the emotion of human spaceflight and exploration."

Eshkeri said: "Human spaceflight will be at the forefront of public consciousness in 2026, with the planned Artemis II mission taking humans back to the moon. This created the perfect opportunity to bring back *Space Station Earth* to give



SPACE ENTHUSIAST: Composer Eshkeri and, below, Tim Peake
PHOTO CREDIT: Alex Chamberlin

audiences the opportunity to see through the eyes of an astronaut."

The composer is renowned for creating scores to a variety of creative projects, from major Hollywood movies to hit TV shows and video game franchises. His recent credits include the soundtracks to the new Netflix series *House of Guinness*, the recent crime drama *MobLand* (created with Matt Bellamy of Muse) which stars Tom Hardy and Pierce Brosnan, and the documentary *Super/Man: The Christopher Reeve Story*. His collaborators have included Coldplay, Take That, Annie Lennox, Pink Floyd's David Gilmour, Sir David Attenborough and Ralph Fiennes.

● Go to: ilaneshkeri.com for more tour details.



tion

the personal cost of their deception.

Noor Inayat Khan was the first female wireless operator sent by SOE into Occupied France, where she successfully transmitted messages to London for four months before being betrayed, captured and executed. Her bravery is displayed alongside more recent case studies, including an interview with Bellingcat founder Eliot Higgins. Bellingcat, an international collective of researchers, used open-source data to uncover the real identities of those responsible for the Salisbury Novichok poisonings in 2018, said an IWM North spokesperson.

Throughout its run, *Spies, Lies and Deception* will be accompanied by a



SNEAKY:
Overshoes made by SOE to disguise wearer's footprints

programme of activity at IWM North. Families will be invited to enter the world of deception through themed activities and a trail, with opportunities to test powers of observation.

● Go to: iwm.org.uk for more details.



Theatre

Double Indemnity
UK and Ireland tour

Mischa's here, at the Double

HOLLYWOOD STAR Mischa Barton (*The O.C.*) makes her UK theatre debut as the ultimate femme fatale in *Double Indemnity*, a new stage adaptation of the crime novel by James M. Cain.

The story that inspired Billy Wilder's legendary film noir masterpiece opens at Eastbourne's Devonshire Park Theatre on February 5, 2026 and finishes at the New Theatre, Cardiff on May 9. In between it travels to venues including Brighton's Theatre Royal (March 10-14), Wycombe Swan (April 7-11) and Manchester's Opera House (April 28-May 2).

"I am absolutely thrilled to be returning to the stage and making my UK theatre

debut in *Double Indemnity*," Barton (pictured) said. "This classic film noir favourite is a gripping tale of deceit, tension and suspense and I cannot wait to step into the role of Phyllis and share her with audiences across the UK and Ireland for the first time."

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

Together, they

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

It was her role as Marissa Cooper in the hit television series *The O.C.* (2003-2006) that launched Barton to stardom. In recent years she has focused on independent cinema. Her latest work includes a new independent feature, *Sleepwalker*, in which she stars opposite Hayden Panettiere.

The second instalment in the Miranda Green franchise, *Murder at the Embassy*, starring Barton in the lead role, was released recently.

● Go to: doubleindemnityplay.co.uk for full tour details.





Your Announcements

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

Death

IT is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Paul Stephen Brennan, Sqn Ldr (Ret'd). He passed peacefully at home in the presence of his loving family on November 9. Funeral to take place November 28 at 2.30pm at Telford crematorium.



Sqn Ldr Paul Brennan

Reunions

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

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

CALLING all former TG11 comms personnel, T/phonists, TPOs, Tels, Wop Spec, TCOs, TCCs, TRCs and any comms titles that may have superseded the aforementioned.

All are welcome to attend the Trade Group 11 Association reunion to be held on Friday, March 20 to Sunday, March 22,

2026. The venue will be The Marriott Delta Hotels, Mellors Way, off Woodhouse Way, Nottingham Belfry, Nottingham NG8 6PY. Further details if required can be found on the TG11 Association website at tg11association.com. If not a member, details can be found on how to join.

Associations

591 SU Association. In its 72nd year of existence, 591 Signal Unit has established an Association (better late than never!). Its aim is to foster esprit de corps and comradeship, to promote and maintain the ethos and heritage of this incredible Signals Unit. 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 2025.

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

RAF Catering Warrant Officers' and Seniors' Association: all serving or retired TG19 WO or FS and all former Catering Branch Officers are invited to join the RAF CWO&SA. We meet twice yearly with a vibrant gathering of retired and serving members. Please email: janedjones6@btinternet.com.

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

Association holds farewell

SEVENTY MEMBERS and friends of the Shackleton Association gathered in a hotel near the National Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire last month to hold their final function after 38 years during which *The Growler*, their quarterly magazine, was continuously published.

The Association was started in Australia in October 1987 and grew to a worldwide membership of about 1,400, with 168 aircraft built – sadly a total of 16 were lost in service.

The Shackleton was in active service from 1951 to 1991.

Before the Annual General Meeting, all those present gathered at the Arboretum for a short service which was followed by a procession, led by the Association's President AVM Andrew Roberts (Ret'd) and the Association standard.

A wreath was laid at the Association Memorial, the memorial will be looked after in perpetuity – funded by the Association. The Standard will rest in St Eval church.



PROCESSION: Above, on the way to the Shackleton Association memorial inset, right

"A final AGM preceded a Meet & Greet then dinner after a few choice words from our President," said Bill Hercus, editor of *The Growler*.

He added: "I flew the Mk2 aircraft which sported a tailwheel thus displaying some familiar characteristics of the aircraft from which it was developed, the Lancaster.

"Standing beside the aircraft in a sunny Bermuda I was approached by a tall, lean, bronzed first officer from a recently landed B707.

"Looking me up and down, then at the aircraft behind me, he intoned in a slow Texan drawl, 'Say fella, have you just hopped off that crazy animal?'"

"Says it all, really."

Prisoners make own Cenotaph

STAFF AND prisoners at a West Midlands prison commemorated this year's Remembrance Sunday in front of a Cenotaph they made themselves.

After a request from an HMP Stafford officer, who is a former Serviceman, to make a cenotaph from cardboard, the idea grew to build a replica of the London Cenotaph in Whitehall.

A collaboration between different courses at HMP Stafford's vocational training centre produced a 1:5 scale replica of the London Cenotaph, over two metres high.

Using prisoners' skills, and with help from staff, work was begun by the plastering team who built a wooden frame adding

plasterboard, then skimming it. It then went to the painting and decorating team, with the finishing touches added by past members of the art and design course.

The Cenotaph was built on a pallet, so it could easily be transferred from dry storage ready for outdoor use.

Nicola Randles, Local Education Manager at Stafford, said: "It couldn't have been any better. Every little last bit was handmade here. Even the flags were made from rags in the workshops."

Among those attending, former soldier Mick said it was "a sensational representation of the original Cenotaph, it's given us a



RESPECT: A prisoner, also a military veteran, pays tribute at the replica Cenotaph

focal point worthy of the service." Former RAF airman Bryan said: "They've done a grand job of it. It makes all the difference."

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Tony gets on his bike

RESERVIST Tony Hall (pictured) is taking on a mammoth challenge – cycling 1,000 miles from Land's End to John o'Groats next April to raise money for the RAF Benevolent Fund.

Wg Cdr Hall, 63, said: "I will be completing the ride solo and unsupported on my trusty old steel 1993 Dawes Galaxy bicycle."

● Go to: justgiving.com to donate towards Tony's £500 target.



Veterans attend Royal reception

WORLD WAR II veterans from all three Services were invited to attend a Royal reception at Windsor Castle earlier this month to reflect on the 80th anniversary of VJ Day.

Nine of the vets were supported by the Royal British Legion and two by the Burma Star Association.

Among those attending were Denis Elix, aged 100, from Surrey. Denis (*below, and below right*) joined the RAF in November 1942 and trained as a

Wireless Operator. He was sent to India and travelled to Calcutta, Bombay (now Mumbai) and Comilla, where he spent most of his time.

An RBL spokesperson said: "On VJ Day he was on leave and had met up with an old school friend and travelled to Nainital, India.

"When they arrived, they found out about the Japanese surrender and celebrated with the local people – he recalled an incredible celebratory



atmosphere. He is a Burma Star recipient for working point to point East of the Brahmaputra River."

Also at the reception was Edwin Habberley, 102, from Northamptonshire. Originally from Walthamstow, Edwin (*above and above middle*) served from 1942–1946.

The spokesperson added: "He underwent training in America and was deployed to Egypt and then moved on to India, where he joined 615 Squadron. He was mostly involved in anti-pirate control in the Far East. He was in a convalescent home in Calcutta on VJ Day 1945 and returned home in 1946."

Another RAF attendee was Ron Gumbley (*above right and below right*), aged 101, from



Birmingham, who volunteered to join the Service in 1943 aged 18. He was soon sent across the world, where he served in the postal service, guiding postal drops onto the beaches of Burma and Bangladesh.



The spokesperson said: "He knew it was important work, saying 'this was the only contact from home we ever had, so it was an essential service that I was very proud to be a part of."


"On VJ Day, he was on his way to Singapore but there wasn't much cause for celebration because they could still see kamikaze planes flying overhead. Whilst serving, he missed the birth of his first child and only met her when he was discharged in 1947. She was already two years old."



Earlier this year HM King Charles, Patron of the Royal British Legion, attended a commemorative event at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire to mark the 80th anniversary of VJ Day, hosted by the RBL.







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Prize Crossword
No. 398

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the 19 letters in yellow squares to find an RAF aircraft.

Across

- 1. A slab put back on light wood (5)
- 4. Pole shows fury at bombardment (7)
- 8. Remarkable flower on US-Canadian border (7)
- 9. Crystal is a grand girl (5)
- 10. Golf competition for all (4)
- 11. RAF does not want it violated (8)
- 13. 100 argue over bird (4)
- 14. Black planes? (4)
- 16. Goya's OBE ordered by Canadian base (5,3)
- 17. In Cognac, residents have this much space (4)
- 20. Winning by a small margin (5)
- 21. First man and worker determined (7)
- 22. Shrubs had pens ruined (7)
- 23. Pool of money for a cute cat? (5)

Down

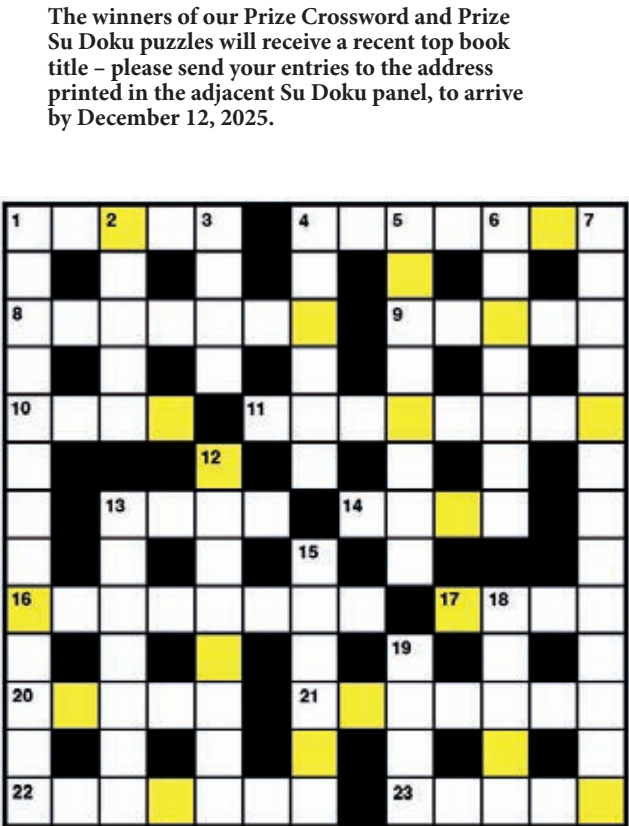
- 1. Financial institution destructively banged on flank (4,2,7)
- 2. The French spend time at German base (5)
- 3. From our time this morning a man emerges (4)
- 4. Support Liz returns to this country (6)
- 5. Show emotion on record (8)
- 6. Video game figures girl attached to sailors (7)
- 7. NATO operation upsets nearest guard (7,6)
- 12. RAF plane will sit while I join fellow (8)
- 13. 100 are vanquished, remaining jubilant and intimate (5-2)
- 15. Sarah returns southern badger (6)
- 18. Talk about northern song (5)
- 19. Sell off RAF jet (4)

Name:

Address:

.....

RAF aircraft: Crossword No. 398



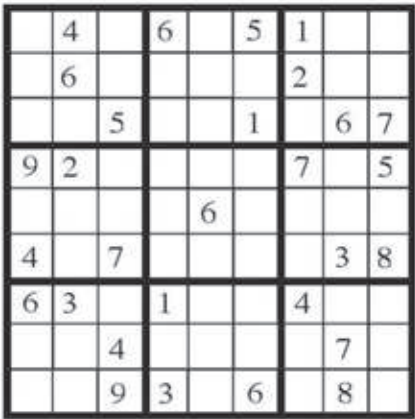
Prize Crossword No. 397 winner is: Mr D Allison, Metheringham, Lincoln.

Solution to Crossword No. 397
Across – 7. Osprey 8. Calico 10. Notable 11. Rotor 12. Tale 13. Igloo 17. Perth 18. Kane 22. Tiara 23. Iceberg 24. Airbus 25. Mature
Down – 1. Hornets 2. Spatula 3. Derby 4. Warrior 5. Pinto 6. Cobra 9. Wedgetail 14. Pegasus 15. Careful 16. Gee-gees 19. Atlas 20. Harry 21. Medal
RAF plane - Typhoon



Prize Su Doku
No. 408

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 December 12, 2025. The winner of Su Doku No: 406 is: Lesley Hayward-Mudge, King's Lynn.

Solution to Su Doku No. 407



Film Review
Jay Kelly (12A)

In cinemas now, on Netflix from Dec 15

Film that's in luvvie with itself

GEORGE CLOONEY plays a charming movie star racing to Italy, with team in tow, to accept a lifetime achievement award in Noah Baumbach's self-reflexive comedy.

Jay Kelly (Clooney) is handsome, successful and at the height of his powers. He's had a storied career with a team who would do anything for him. But a chance encounter with an old friend (Billy Crudup) reminds him of his humble beginnings and the stolen audition that catapulted him to fame.

This somewhat showy unravelling sees Jay abandon his upcoming film commitments to follow his teenage daughter to Italy, under the guise of accepting an award that, apparently, they've been trying to give him for years.

Along for the ride are his ever-loyal entourage: his agent (Adam Sandler), producer (Laura Dern), and hairdresser (played by the film's writer Emily Mortimer). The film is big and cheerful, with bite-sized morsels of pathos, all wrapped up in a glossy, self-aware 'movie movie' that zips along with charm and pizzazz. And despite the protagonist practically being called George Clooney, it never feels real for a moment. Jay – or George, it's hard to tell – even tells a train full of strangers how difficult it is to play oneself. The film is full of knowing winks and nudges, including a cameo



ART IMITATING ART: Clooney as movie star Jay Kelly

from Baumbach himself as a director. Yet for all its self-references and affectionate fawning over filmmaking, it's hard to shake the sense that Jay Kelly is mostly in love with itself. It's entertaining, but oddly exclusionary – a film about life not lived, seen through the eyes of an extraordinarily privileged movie star. Still, there's no denying its magnetism. Jay Kelly is pure, embraced artifice – sparkling with Clooney's charm and the orchestral pep that carries it along. Two roundels out of five
Review by Sam Cooney



Competition
The Creeps (15)

4K UHD, Blu-ray, DVD & digital from Dec 1

Win!

Happy Creepmas

IT'S BEEN hailed as 'a charmingly trashy celebration of 1980s cult classics, made with great attention to detail' (Cineuropa)...the Creeps are mean, mischievous, and downright deadly.

When a mysterious gateway between dimensions unleashes a horde of nasty little creatures into Vuokatti Ski Resort, Zach and his friends' dream holiday takes a turn for the terrifying. What was supposed to be an epic party – filled with sex, drugs, rock 'n' roll, and Hollywood legend Christopher Lambert – spirals into pure chaos as the Creeps run wild. Now, Zach must rise to the occasion, battle the pint-sized terrors, and prove that being a hero isn't so different from the '80s movies he worships. The cast includes cult legends, Joe Dante (director of Gremlins and The Howling), William Daniels (Knight Rider) and Christopher Lambert (Mortal Kombat, Highlander). Written and directed by



GUNNA GET MESSY: Up for the fight

Marko Mäkilaakso (Bordertown, It Came from the Desert), The Creeps is described as a festive, fun and gory alternative for the holiday season. We have copies on DVD up for grabs – for your chance to win one, simply tell us: Which Hollywood legend appears in The Creeps? Email your answer, marked The Creeps DVD 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 December 12. Please include your full postal address.