

The KGB spy who turned double agent for his wife

● See page 17

Win!

Military Family Service Journal

● See page 21

Win!

ROYAL AIR FORCE

Friday, Oct 30, 2026
Edition No.1643

Only 99p

RAF News

Gulf War pilots put their lives on line

See pages 14-15

Win new book about the bravery of Op Granby aircrews



Rugby Honour for Cokayne

See p23



Alpine Ready for the winter



● See page 26

Motorsport Bikers all revved up



● See page 27

All fired up

Chinook and Atlas target

UK wildfire threat



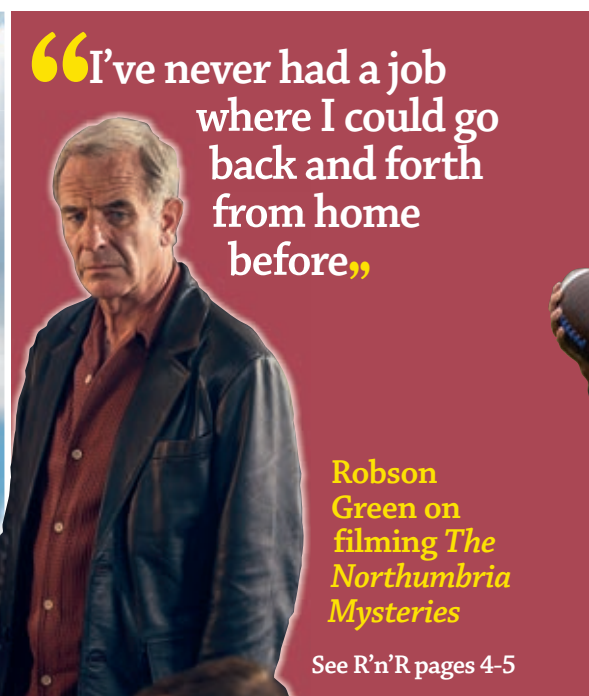
Simon Mander

CHINOOKS AND A400Ms will be equipped to fight wildfires in Britain for the first time, in preparation for future extreme weather driven by climate change.

Military aircraft will be able to help crews across the UK battle blazes on remote moorland, steep hillsides, and other hard-to-reach terrain.

● Continued on page 2

BiteSize



ROYAL AIR FORCE RAF News

RAF News

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

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

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

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

Sport: sports@rafnews.co.uk

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

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

Forces fire alert

Continued from front

Defence Secretary Wes Streeting said: “As the threat of wildfires in the UK grows, defence will step up to provide greater support to our emergency services and protect military training areas across the country.

“This will see the RAF’s Chinook helicopters and A400M aircraft equipped with new specialist firefighting equipment to enable them to tackle wildfires from the skies for the first time.

Chinook crews from 1310 Flight are no strangers to dousing blazes and regularly practise water collection and drops using Bambi buckets from Akrotiri in Cyprus.

Firefighters in England will also get lightweight personal protective equipment, backed by a £25 million plan to restore dried-out peatlands so they hold more water and function as natural firebreaks.

Prime Minister Andy Burnham said: “Military aircraft will stand ready to help tackle

wildfires from the sky. We cannot put people through another summer like this one.”

This summer was the UK’s hottest on record, and the Met Office has found that climate change made the extreme heat around 130 times more likely.

The investment announced will allow the MOD to develop, for the first time, an aerial firefighting capability permanently based in the UK.

As Britain’s second largest landowner, it requires an aerial firefighting capability to adapt to the increased risk of wildfires facing the country.

Climate Transition Minister Katie White said: “We can’t stop every wildfire, flood, or storm, but we can make sure Britain is ready.

“This summit is about better equipping our brave emergency services, protecting our people and building a stronger country, whatever the weather.”



This Week In History



1940 Battle ends

THE BATTLE of Britain ends after Fighter Command halts plans for a Nazi invasion. More than 500 UK pilots die defending the nation’s skies.

1960 QCS formed

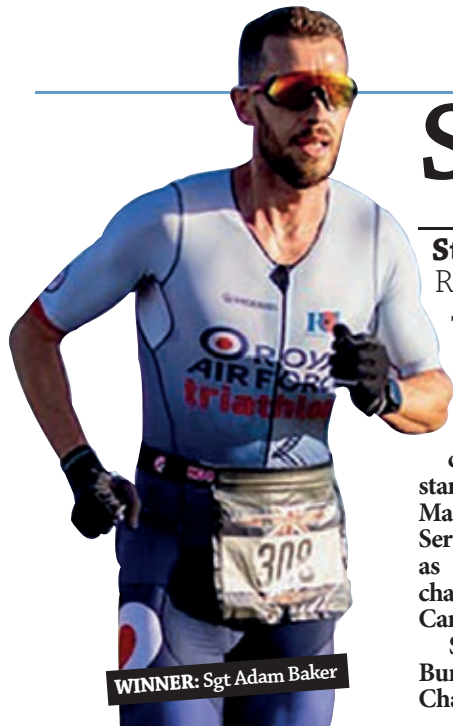
THE QUEEN’S Colour Sqn, manned by RAF Regt personnel, is established at Uxbridge to carry out ceremonial duties.



1991 Ethiopia famine relief

HERCULES LAUNCHES famine relief flights to Ethiopia, delivering 32,000 tons of aid during the 10-month Operation Bushel.

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



WINNER: Sgt Adam Baker

Staff Reporter
RAF Club, London

TRIATHLETE SGT Adam Baker and Flt Lt Nicole Burger took top honours at this year's Sports awards at the RAF Club.

The Sportsman of the Year title crowns a stunning year for Endurance star Baker, who claimed the British Masters half-marathon and Inter-Services' 10km titles in the 2026 season, as he edged out Service swimming champ Cpl Kyle Booth and athlete ASI Cameron Tindle for the award.

Skeleton bob ice queen Flt Lt Nicole Burger overhauled swim supremo Sgt Charlotte Goodman and hockey player



RING KINGS: RAF Elite Boxing team

ASI Alexandra Naughalty to take the women's title after storming her way to international prominence, representing her native South Africa at the Olympics

and winning the North America Cup.

Service rugby ace and England International Flt Lt Amy Cokayne was also honoured at the ceremony as she was presented with a Special Recognition award for raising the profile of Service rugby to record heights, winning 94 England caps and helping power the national team to a World Cup hat-trick.

This year's Team Award went to the RAF Boxing Elite team who enjoyed a blockbuster season clinching victory in the Inter-Services after a 54-year drought.

● See p23 for all the nominees.



WINNER: Flt Lt Burger



GULF MISSION: RAF Typhoon at King Abdulaziz Airbase in Saudi Arabia during a recent joint exercise

Britain backs Saudi defence

Simon Mander

TYPHOONS WILL fly defensive counter missions to protect Saudi cities against aerial attacks by Houthi rebels, it has been announced.

The British fighter jets will not conduct offensive strikes and an RAF A400M will support the movement of defence material within the Middle Eastern state.

The move builds on the existing deployment of air defence equipment to protect against missiles and drone attacks.

It also extends air-to-air refuelling support for Saudi operations to degrade Houthi military targets in Yemen.

Defence Secretary Wes Streeting said: "The continuing attacks from the Houthis on our ally Saudi Arabia are absolutely despicable.

"The targeting of the airport in Riyadh in particular shows the lengths the Houthis are going to escalate the situation in the region."

Houthi terrorists have been at war with Yemen's internationally backed government since it was ousted from the capital Sanaa in 2014.

Since September Saudi Arabia has been struggling to fend off Houthi attacks after ceasefire talks broke down.

Mr Streeting said: "This reckless behaviour deepens Yemen's already devastating humanitarian crisis, and it is in the UK's national economic and security interest that they do not succeed."

The Houthis have targeted energy facilities and key ports in Saudi.

They have struck King Khalid airport killing 13 people and injuring 308 others.

"We unequivocally condemn the Houthi attacks on civilian targets like King Khalid International Airport and are clear that Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Yemen have the right to defend themselves," Mr Streeting added.

KCS welcome for Sultan



ROYAL RAIN: KCS braves the downpour to welcome Sultan Haitham bin Tariq to Windsor Castle. Above right, meeting the Prince and Princess of Wales

A GUNNER from The King's Colour Squadron shouts orders to an RAF contingent providing a ceremonial welcome for His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's visit to Windsor Castle.

More than 800 Service personnel delivered a ceremonial welcome as the State Visit of Oman to the United Kingdom got underway.

Hosted by The King and The Queen, the event celebrates more than 200 years of friendship between the two countries and the current defence partnership.

As Sultan Haitham stepped onto the Royal Pavilion on Datchet Road, The King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery fired a 41-Gun Royal Salute from Home Park, Windsor.

The Sultan also joined The King and The Queen for a ceremonial carriage procession through Windsor's flag-lined streets escorted by the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment.



**Royal Air Force
Benevolent Fund**

**"Our break gave us
the chance to spend
quality time together
as a family"**

**RAF veteran
Bill**



Need a break?

Apply for a relaxing stay in Yorkshire

**Our accessible four-bedroom bungalow in
the seaside town of Bridlington is the perfect
place to unwind when life feels challenging.**

**Serving and former RAF personnel are
welcome to apply for a stay.**

The RAF Benevolent Fund is a registered charity in England and Wales (1081009) and Scotland (SC038109). Eligibility criteria apply, visit our website for more details on the application process and pricing.

Apply to stay:
rafbf.org/folly-visit

Call our helpline:
0300 102 1919



Scan me
with your
camera

Darts diva Zara hits the Royal bullseye

Campaigning Cpl joins forces with rugby star Tindall

CRUSADING CPL Zara Durrant has hit the bullseye with her campaign to put darts at the heart of Forces life after stepping up to the fundraising oche.

The 38-year-old single mum won her battle to get the game recognised by Sports boards across the Armed Forces and has raised more than £23,000 with the recent Operation Bullseye event, pairing military players with the darts world's top pro talent.

Now Royal rugby star Mike Tindall is backing her campaign and the two are planning a fundraiser to bring the world of rugby and darts together with a knock-out charity tournament featuring serving and veteran Forces players and professional talent.

Zara said: "I reached out to Mike, who's involved in the Rugby for Heroes charity, on social media and he got straight back to me."

"To be honest, I suspect he replied so quickly because his wife's called Zara and seeing my name might have triggered him."

"When people ask my name and I tell them they often say 'like the shop' and I usually reply 'no - like the princess!'"

Cpl Durrant launched Defence Darts and organised Operation Bullseye to help with her bid to get the game recognised in the military and help fight loneliness across the Service.

It has taken off so fast the RAF logistics specialist says she is struggling to cope with the reaction.

She has set up an online league allowing military personnel to

join a game anywhere in the world using the Defence Darts app linked to a web cam.

Zara added: "No matter where anyone is based or if they have moved to a different station, left the Service or are on deployment, they can play virtually."

"All they need is a board with a camera. They can play and input the score and enjoy a game with someone who could be thousands of miles away."

"When it comes to mental health guys aren't ones for telling others that they have had a bad day and could do with a chat, but they will ask if anyone is free for an online game."

Since launching the app Zara's had inquiries from the police, ambulance and fire services, who are hoping to set up Bluelight darts leagues using her model.

She's been asked to take the healing power of the pub game to Ukraine to help the war-torn country's injured frontline fighters and has been invited to put a tournament together for next year's Invictus Games in Birmingham.

Zara says she was brought up in a darts-playing family and got the love of the sport from her uncle Glen Durrant - the three times World Champion who is now a commentator for TV's biggest tournaments.

She said: "I grew up with the game and I know what darts can do. It's inclusive, you don't need money to play or a lot of space to do it."

"Through Uncle Glen I have the contacts across the professional game and that has been so useful



OCHS AYE: Cpl Durrant with former England rugby international Mike Tindall at a recent fundraising event

getting it off the ground."

Her campaign has caught the attention of the World Darts Federation, who asked Zara to field a team of four to play in the World Masters event in Las Vegas.

Zara added: "We had one veteran who was medically discharged with PTSD. He ended up jobless and homeless and revealed he planned to take his own life."

"He had been playing in pub tournaments for cash, just to get enough money to feed himself."

"The Defence Darts Foundation covered the costs of flying him out for the tournament and he got through to the quarter-finals. It has totally changed his life."



INSPIRATION: Glen Durrant

Forces bus pass

Staff Reporter

BUS OPERATOR Stagecoach is offering free travel ahead of Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day.

Veterans, serving military, Service families and cadets can use its vehicles for no charge across the country on Sunday, November 8 and Wednesday, November 11, excluding

services operated by Megabus, Transport for London, and the Bee Network.

To access free travel serving military should wear uniform or present a valid military ID card and veterans should present a badge or military medal.





Become a member of the Royal British Legion today

Whether you have served or are serving, are part of the Armed Forces community, or just want to stand with our service personnel, there's a place for you at the Royal British Legion.

Together, our members form an international community that champions our cause, strengthens camaraderie, and helps the Armed Forces community access support for life.

Search **Join RBL**

rbl.org.uk

Registered charity number in England and Wales 219279 and Scotland SC054446



VAULTING AMBITION:
Sqn Ldr Samantha May
will be going for Gold at
the Invictus Games in
Birmingham next year

Injured doc in pole position for Invictus

Battling medic Sam has sights set high for 2027 games showdown



Simon Mander

A POLE-VAULTING Air Force doctor has told how the Invictus Games got her back into sport despite a devastating injury.

Sqn Ldr Samantha May damaged knee ligaments in an accident in 2023 which left her unable to work or compete and feeling isolated.

But while on a Royal British Legion recovery course, she joined Team UK for Invictus Games Vancouver Whistler 2025 which changed everything.

"I was becoming an athlete

again," said Sqn Ldr May, who is currently training in emergency medicine in Birmingham.

She joined the University Air Squadron while studying medicine at Oxford and joined the RAF after qualifying as a doctor.

At university she fell in love with pole vault, going on to captain the RAF athletics team and set the Armed Forces pole vault record.

At the Invictus Games last year, Sqn Ldr May competed in swimming, skiing, skeleton and wheelchair basketball, winning medals in skiing and swimming.

A novice swimmer, she committed to her training and came away with bronze in the pool. "When I was swimming, I was becoming an athlete again," she said.

"I was able to rely on myself, which was a really empowering thing."

Back at work in the fast-paced, high-pressure world of emergency medicine, she draws on the teamwork, resilience and perseverance she built through Invictus Games.

Outside work, she plays wheelchair basketball at National

League level, a sport she says she would never have found without the Games.

"It gives me a place where I am defined by my ability instead of my injury," she said. "I arrive here and no one asks me about my knee; I can just be myself."

In 2027, the Invictus Games comes to Birmingham, Sqn Ldr May's home for more than a decade, where she has worked at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, on Covid wards and in emergency departments.

● For further details go to: invictusgames2027.org

Bulletin



CLIMATE CONTROL: Flt Lt Matt Plowden receives award for Shawbury's safety team

Safety first

AIR FORCE safety and meteorological specialists netted awards established in honour of a bomber crew killed when their Halifax crashed in thick fog.

The Groves Awards recognise excellence in aviation safety and follow the recent release of the film *Pressure*, revealing the role of Britain's meteorologists as the Allies prepared for the D-Day invasion.

Named after Sgt Louis Groves who died along with his eight crewmates when the 517 Sqn aircraft went down in bad weather in 1946, the awards ceremony followed a service at the Memorial Stone in the Quantocks which marks the crash scene.

Shawbury's Air Safety Management team received the Ground Safety Award while the Air Safety Award went to 1710 Naval Air Sqn.

The Met Office's Dr Kirsty Hanely was presented with the Meteorology Award and her colleague Robert Scovell clinched the Meteorological Observation Award.

Lifesavers on call at Brize

Simon Mander

MEDICS AT RAF Brize Norton showcased some of the lifesaving techniques they use on operations across the globe.

Dynamic demonstrations revealed how the Air Medical Force delivers care in complex and austere environments, from point of injury through to strategic Aeromedical Evacuation back to the UK.

Tactical Medical Wing Officer Commanding, Wg Cdr Rosie Barrow, said: "Our people stand ready to deliver lifesaving care anywhere in the world, whether supporting deployed operations, responding to crisis or bringing sick and injured patients safely home."

The drill featured the

Operational Patient Care Pathway, demonstrating how the Air Medical Force delivers world-class medical care wherever it is required.

Medical Force Commander Gp Capt Becky Woolley said: "In an increasingly uncertain world, the need for highly-trained, rapidly-deployable medical teams has never been greater."

Two operational squadrons deliver the Global Aeromedical Evacuation Service at the Oxfordshire station.

Tactical Medical Wing trains, equips and deploys the wider RAF Medical Services in support of operations worldwide.





serco

Beyond the base. Sustaining jobs across the UK.

Specialist defence work that builds jobs, skills and growth.

Beyond the base, Serco supports local jobs, invests in SMEs and helps grow rural and coastal economies. For every five direct Serco roles, three more are supported through our supply chain, creating lasting benefits for the communities that stand alongside our Armed Forces.

Explore PROTECT, the framework behind our mission-critical operations: www.serco.com/defence/PROTECT



BBMF veterans' salute



VINTAGE DISPLAY: The BBMF's Spitfire Mk Vb takes to the skies over Coningsby as the station marks Battle of Britain Members Day

Simon Mander

THE BBMF'S Spitfire MkVb took to the skies over WWII's Bomber County as Lincolnshire marked the Battle of Britain Members Day at Coningsby.

The vintage warbird engaged in offensive fighter patrols with RAF Fighter Command as it went on the offensive against the Luftwaffe.

It flew more than 140 operational combat sorties, making it one of the longest-surviving, continuously flown frontline fighters. It was demobilised and raced as a civilian air-racer before being gifted to the BBMF in September 1965.

The event also featured displays from the Irish Silver Swallows and the BBMF's Dakota as organisers paid tribute to those who flew, maintained, and supported

operations during the conflict.

In January 1942, the Hawker Hurricane Mk IIC was delivered to 247 Sqn at RAF Predannack, on the Lizard peninsula in Cornwall. The BBMF aircraft is now painted in its wartime 247 Sqn night-fighting colours. In common with 247 Sqn's other Hurricanes, it was painted all-over matt black and was fitted with anti-glare panels over the engine exhausts.

Bulletin



Air police honoured

FIVE PERSONNEL were honoured this month for their role during Operation Chessman, the RAF's Enhanced Air Policing deployment to Poland in 2025.

Wg Cdr Chris Jacob, Wg Cdr Mark Coram, Sqn Ldr Konstantinos Stamatakis, WO Richard Grimshaw-Else and Chf Tech Aaron Smith received the Polish Army medal in London.

The presentation was made at the Polish Embassy and was attended by Head Strategic Engagement, Air Cdre Emily Flynn.



DRONE KILLER: The ORCUS system has been deployed across the Gulf

UK kit lift for Kuwait

UK AI-ENABLED air defence systems are to be sent to Kuwait as part of a £370 million deal.

The contract with MARSS Systems Limited will provide and integrate an advanced air defence system for Kuwait, incorporating jammers, radars, and interceptors to counter airborne threats.

The move follows Iran's aggressive missile and drone attacks and the deployment of the RAF's ORCUS system which helps personnel detect drones early and take decisive action.

The UK has already supported Kuwait with Rapid Sentry, a ground-based air defence missile system.

Defence Readiness Minister Luke Pollard said: "By backing Kuwait with world-leading British technology, we're strengthening a vital ally's defences against real and growing threats."

Island combat tests Reserves

Staff Reporter

RESERVISTS FROM across Britain honed their warfighting skills during recent training on the Isle of Wight.

Personnel from three Royal Auxiliary Air Force squadrons – 505 Sqn at St Mawgan in Cornwall, 611 Sqn in Merseyside and 614 Sqn in Cardiff – took part in Exercise Wyvern Cymru.

Among them was full-time reservist and St Mawgan media officer Flt Lt Susie Woods, who served as a regular for 10 years returning in May 2025.

She said: "What stood out most was the enthusiasm, professionalism and positive attitude of everyone I met."

"The average age of those taking part was 44, demonstrating that it is never too late to challenge yourself, learn new skills, meet new people and contribute to Defence."

Participants took on challenges in fieldcraft, on the shooting ranges, in adventurous training and wider military skills.

"What struck me most was the commitment. These are people who already have busy lives, yet they choose to give up their spare time to develop themselves, support their units and are



effective," said Flt Lt Woods. "They train hard, support each other, and bring a huge amount of energy to everything they do."

"To me, they were nothing

short of inspirational."

She said the Exercise was intense, tough and demanding, but genuinely enjoyable and working alongside reservists

from other squadrons reinforced how important teamwork, communication and mutual support were in achieving objectives.

One reservist who works in Defence as a Commercial Manager joined up because of Vladimir Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

He said: "The invasion of Ukraine made me reflect on global security and the world my daughter's generation may face."

"As a father, I wanted to contribute towards protecting those who cannot protect themselves, and I am proud to serve as an active PTVR."

"The field training was a particular highlight, especially the final exercise, which reinforced the importance of teamwork."

"The survival briefing was also memorable – engaging, insightful and, thankfully, on this exercise, worms and snails were off the menu."

"For anyone thinking, 'I would love to do something different, but I am not sure if it is for me,' my message is simple: find out," said Flt Lt Woods.

"I came away from the Exercise reminded that people are at the heart of the Royal Air Force."

"It was a great experience, and I would recommend Reserve service to anyone."

News

Sea King survivor hits Cranwell wall

Simon Mander

A HELICOPTER crewman who ditched in the sea when a blaze ripped through his aircraft has told of how he cheated death as he signed on at Cranwell's Wall of Honour.

The Royal Navy's longest-serving frontline Commanding Officer, Cdr Jason 'Jas' Phillips, suffered serious burns and revealed the horror of watching as a member of his crew rolled on the cabin floor in flames as their Sea King plunged into water.

Now the chairman of the Goldfish Club, founded in World War II for Allied aircrew who survived crashing, ditching or parachuting into water, he spoke about his experiences of survival against the odds to the latest graduates of Cranwell's SERE training course.

Training centre chief Mark Fairhead said: "Jas shared candid examples of irrational thought in a crisis and described how he felt to be trapped under water and 'know' you're about to die and of



DOWNED BUT NOT OUT: Cdr Jas Phillips signs the Wall of Honour at Cranwell
PHOTO: GORDON ELIAS

the immense relief and euphoric state at realising he and the whole crew had survived."

Cdr Phillips spent two years as the Commander of BRNC Dartmouth, before returning to RNAS Culdrose for his final two appointments, including as the last Air Display Director. He retired in November 2019

but continues to instruct on the Merlin simulator.

Mr Fairhead added: "Jas is a huge character with a quick wit.

"His strength, humility and commitment to the support and care for others, as a leader, shone through. He exudes the very essence of dedication to people and unconquered spirit."



TOP DOG: Coningsby Military Working Dog Katie takes the trophy at the recent Honington trials

2ND PLACE: Nina

3RD PLACE: Cezar

Dogs of war battle it out

THE RAF'S most highly skilled four-legged fighters came together to battle it out for the Top Dog title at Honington.

Handlers from Akrotiri, Brize Norton, Coningsby, Lossiemouth, Marham and Waddington showcased their threat assessment, patrol and detection skills tasks using the dogs' natural scenting abilities and intruder apprehension techniques.

Facing a full series of demanding operational scenarios, handlers and their charges were assessed on core military policing skills in the week-long competition.

Taking first place and the coveted 'Top Dog' title was MWD Katie from Coningsby. MWD Nina secured second place while MWD Cezar, from Lossiemouth, finished third.

RAF SPORTS LOTTERY

THE VITAL LIFELINE FOR RAF SPORT

DID YOU KNOW? Your membership helps to provide the majority of the much needed funding for sport in the RAF.

Support your RAF charity by playing today at:

www.rafcf.org.uk



1ST PRIZE

£10,000

2ND PRIZE

£3,000

3RD PRIZE

£2,000

RAFCentralFund

BeGambleAware.org

The RAF Sports Lottery operates as a society lottery within the Royal Air Force Central Fund and is licensed and regulated by the Gambling Commission (www.gamblingcommission.gov.uk). The Royal Air Force Central Fund is a company registered in England and Wales 8555984, Charity registered in England and Wales 1152560, Charity registered in Scotland SC044299.



'A terrific storyteller'
BOOKLIST

'A pulse-pounding adventure'
PUBLISHERS WEEKLY



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

**MORE GAMES
FOR 2026**

bfbs 
**PRO
LEAGUE**

**Find out more and sign
up at bfbsesports.com**

ESPORTS FOR THE ARMED FORCES



Images: BFBS/British Esports/Jonas Kontaitas



BY APPOINTMENT TO
HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III
MEDALLISTS
WORCESTERSHIRE MEDAL SERVICE LTD
BROMSGROVE



WORCESTERSHIRE MEDAL SERVICE LTD

Specialists in the manufacture and supply
of full and miniature size medals,
medal mounting and framing.

Visit Our Website:
www.worcmedals.com
+44(0)1527 835375
sales@worcmedals.com

124 High Street, Bromsgrove, B61 8HJ



Iran behind UK security alerts

Simon Mander

IRAN HAS been blamed for security alerts at two RAF bases used by American aircraft.

The incidents at Fairford and Molesworth are still under investigation but in a statement to the House of Commons Prime Minister Andy Burnham said both were 'almost certainly' directed by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard.

He said: "We will not tolerate

these threats on our soil. We will crack down on Iran's use of criminal networks, using our full range of powers to target them and their funding streams. And we will bring further sanctions to restrict the capacity of Iran and the IRGC to do us harm."

His comments were echoed by Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood who said the Fairford incident was "highly likely" to have been coordinated by a known individual based in Iran, and almost

certainly directed by the IRGC.

Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband has summoned the Iranian Ambassador and sanctioned two individuals involved in conducting espionage and attacks for Iran in Europe and the US.

He said: "The UK has also concluded this event demonstrates the IRGC's continued willingness to project hostile activity beyond its borders through covert networks and proxy actors."



MISSIONS: USAF bombers take off from RAF Fairford

Record-breaking Red Dux out

TAKE A BOW: Red 1, Wg Cdr Jon Bond, flew his last display at Duxford after a record-breaking run with the Red Arrows



Simon Mander

ONE OF the most experienced Red Arrows of all time has flown his final display.

Former Typhoon pilot Wg Cdr Jon Bond ended his three-year tour as Red 1 at Duxford.

His tenure covered performing for millions of people across the UK, tours of the United States and Canada and the team's 60th anniversary season.

He said: "To have been trusted to lead a team with such history and significance has been the greatest honour of my career."

"I have flown on

three transatlantic tours and two visits to the Gulf region, and have taken part in major national occasions such as The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, RAF100 and the Euro 2020 final flypast over Wembley. Later, I had the privilege of leading formations for events including the D-Day 80 commemorations, HM The King's Birthday Flypasts above London, state visits and took the team to New York for the 250th anniversary of American independence."

Originally from Essex, Wg Cdr Bond joined the RAF in 2006 and first flew as a Red Arrows pilot in 2018 – going on to

complete five seasons before returning as Team Leader for the 2024 diamond anniversary year.

It is thought Wg Cdr Bond's total of eight seasons is a record as a pilot in one of the display positions of Reds 1-9.

He said: "It's easy to look at a display lasting 22 minutes and see only the finished product but behind every display is a huge team of engineers, support staff and specialists who care deeply about getting the job done well."

Wg Cdr Bond also paid tribute to two other Red Arrows pilots saying farewell following the

conclusion of the 2026 season.

He said Sqn Ldr Chris McCann and Flt Lt Dustin Wales, who have both completed three years with the team, had been "utter professionals."

"Both Chris and Dusty have epitomised the squadron motto of éclat and will excel in what they go on to do next," he added.

The Red Arrows completed nearly 40 displays in 2026, culminating in a show at the Imperial War Museum at Duxford.

LANDMARK SEASON: Arrows pilots Sqn Ldr Chris McCann (far left) and Flt Lt Dusty Wales are also standing down
PHOTOS: ASI EMILY MUIR



The bravery of the RAF pilots under fire from Iraq Flying at camel height evading Saddam's SAMs

AS THE UK finally withdraws military personnel from Iraq, 36 years after the launch of Desert Storm – the defining conflict in the Middle East in the modern age – military author Peter Davies reveals the extraordinary bravery of RAF pilots during the hunt for Saddam Hussein's Scud missiles.

Flying low-level facing Vietnam-era technology, Tornado aircrew regularly faced batteries of surface to air missiles bristling with armament developed in the 1960s.

And while the world looked on in horror as downed aircrew became human shield propaganda fodder for the Iraqi regime, the threat faced by fellow aircrew was overlooked.

"During Operation Granby Tornado pilots took advantage of the barren landscape and customarily flew at 'camel height',

Copies of the book up for grabs



WE HAVE copies of Coalition Aircraft vs Iraqi SAMs Operation Desert Storm 1991 to give away to two lucky readers. To enter, answer the following question:

When was the Shrike missile first introduced?

Email your answer, marked SAMS 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 November 13.

Win!

despite rules that required a minimum 300ft altitude," says Peter Davies.

"They were often given airfield targets with dense batteries of AAA and SAMs. The unusually hazardous nature of these missions

was reflected in the grim statistic of six of the 10 operational losses suffered by the RAF in Operation Granby being Tornado GR1s."

Eight aircrew were killed and seven taken prisoner.

One 15 Sqn aircraft among



POWS: RAF nav Jon Nichol and pilot John Peters were captured after their Tornado was shot down

a force of eight Tornados and four Buccaneers was hit by an SA-2 and then by an SA-3.

Navigator Flt Lt Stephen Hicks was killed and navigator Flt Lt Rupert Clark ejected into captivity and brutal treatment.

"Missile warnings were issued by both Buccaneer and F-15C pilots in the vicinity of the target, but these may have been drowned out by radio chatter," says the author.

And yet as *Coalition Aircraft vs Iraqi SAMs Operation Desert Storm 1991* (ospreypublishing.com) points out, the anti-aircraft weaponry used to such devastation had long been known about. The SA-2 for example, was deployed near Hanoi in North Vietnam in the late 1960s. And two decades later upgraded variants still posed a deadly threat in Iraq and occupied Kuwait.

Another 15 Sqn Tornado may have been hit by an unknown SAM after targeting Shaibah airfield near Basrah. That mission required the bomber to fly straight and level for 15 seconds at around 200ft along the length of a runway to deliver its weapon.

Mercifully, things improved when their escorts were replaced with F-4G Wild Weasels and F-15C,

F/A18 or F14s thereafter. Because the weapons available were often woefully inadequate, one named Shrike, introduced in 1963, required its seeker head to be matched to one of six possible threats pre-mission or it would fail. In Vietnam, its kill rate was less than 15 per cent and at best it would damage a radar's antennae.

Nevertheless, Shrikes remained in limited use in Desert Storm before being replaced by HARM missiles and weren't retired until 1992.

Shrike

"The RAF had considered the Shrike as a weapon capable of suppressing enemy air defences," notes Mr Davies.

"Although it did not officially enter widespread frontline service, a handful of missiles supplied by the US were successfully expended by Vulcan bombers against Argentine radar sites during the Falklands War in 1982."

Thankfully, the Air Force chose to arm its Tornados with the more sophisticated HARM and ALARM missiles. But even these had drawbacks, as a HARM missile left its rail it was vital to immediately turn the aircraft away from its exhaust trail



IN THE THICK OF IT:
15 Sqn CO Wg Cdr John Broadbent

©Air Historical Branch (RAF)

Iraqi anti-aircraft missiles during Operation Granby



TARGETS: RAF Tornado F3, US Marine Corps F/A-18 Hornet and RAF Buccaneer (inset, top)
©Air Historical Branch (RAF)

or it would stall the engine on the same side as the missile launch.

The ALARM missile, nicknamed 'Shotgun' by Tornado crews after the Wild Weasels' "Magnum" call to warn of missiles in the air, was programmed to hit a target with a known location. But virtually all the ALARM rounds in theatre had been expended by February 1991.

"During Granby 121 ALARM rounds were fired because there was insufficient information on the location of SAM sites," says Mr Davies.

Nine Tornado GR1s from 9 and 20 Sqs, with crews mainly from the latter unit, were sent to the Gulf War as ALARM shooters. The SA-16 'Gimlet' was probably the most effective Iraqi MANPAD – its twin seekers could detect airframe heat or exhaust radiation and it was resistant to jamming or flares.

Two Coalition fast jets were confirmed as being downed by SA-16s with possibly six more falling to Gimlets. Damningly Mr Davies says, despite suffering initial heavy losses the Iraqis suffered less than 30 per cent of the losses predicted pre-war.

"Most Iraqi radar operators were capable despite often working with obsolescent equipment and lacking in practice and continuation training," he said.

"When the centralised

communications system failed, some managed to break from their rigid Soviet-style routines, developing their own initiatives. After the first two nights it was unusual for an operator to stay constantly on the air, rather than 'blinking' his transmissions."

Many of the combat aircraft used in Desert Storm were retired soon afterwards and the US Air Force was halved in strength. If they had not been, one has to wonder what contribution they could have brought to the current defensive campaign being waged by Ukraine against Russian drone and missile attacks.

Casualties

And despite the mixture of types used to defeat the highly-sophisticated Iraqi defence system, the Americans still thought their victory was a success in limiting the number of SAM casualties to less than 10 aircraft – only 16 per cent of Coalition losses.

Packed with photographs and graphics, *Coalition Aircraft vs Iraqi SAMs Operation Desert Storm 1991* tells a thrilling and often surprising story. Inevitably,



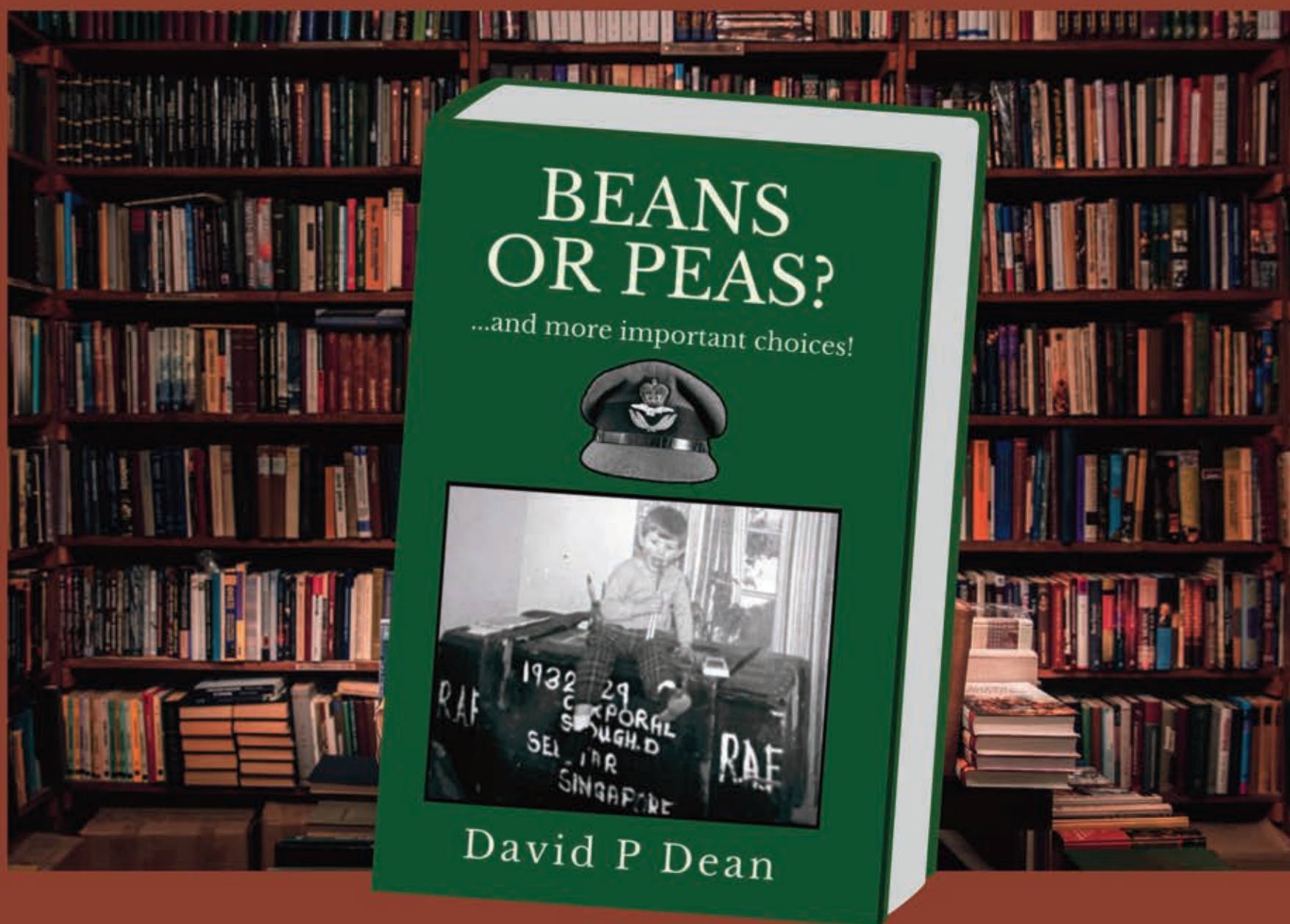
DANGER: The constant threat of an Iraqi Scud missile attack meant that RAF personnel frequently practised NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical) attack drills, continuing to carry out their tasks despite having to wear very uncomfortable protective suits. Here, RAF Regiment gunners load a Rapier airfield defence missile at a battery close to Muharraq in Bahrain

it is American-centric given the USAF's overwhelming role, but it is still readable. Personally, I would have liked more first-person accounts from those who fought but an 80-page book format does

not have enough space for that.

Its descriptions of the workings of the main aircraft defences and the weapons they faced is clearly explained in terms usually accessible to the lay reader.

Part of Peter Davies' more than 60 published titles as an aviation author, it is one of publisher Osprey's *Duel* stable of volumes. Priced £15.99 it's a great stocking filler for aviation buffs and veterans alike.



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

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

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

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

A testimonial to enduring love

A whopping 600 pages!

Out on Amazon

by Tracey Allen

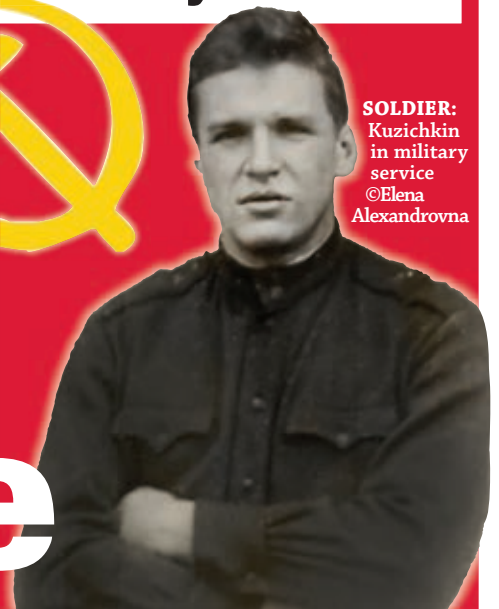
Cold War Turncoat **Feature**

Giant KGB spy became a double agent so he could satisfy his wife



COUPLE: Vladimir Kuzichkin and Galina in the early 70s
©Galina Kokosova Archives

From Russia for love



SOLDIER:
Kuzichkin in military service
©Elena Alexandrovna

AS THE author of bestselling and highly respected books including *A Spy Among Friends*, *Operation Mincemeat*, *Agent Sonya* and *The Spy and the Traitor*, Ben Macintyre knows all too well how murky and bizarre the world of espionage can be.

But the subject of his latest book, *Redwood, The Untold Story of the Cold War's Most Extraordinary Spy* (penguin.co.uk), was, he revealed "unlike any I have come across before."

It's so remarkable it could be a novel – but it's all true.

Redwood was the MI6 codename for Vladimir Kuzichkin, a Tehran-based Russian intelligence officer who became a double agent. Macintyre said: "His impact in history was profound, lasting and concealed for over 40 years."

Coup

It took Macintyre five years to intensely research and write *Redwood*, which reveals Kuzichkin's role in thwarting a Cold War coup and changing the course of history – potentially saving the world from nuclear war. And it all began because the 6ft 4in Russian had a particular personal problem – a sexual secret.

Macintyre explained: "Disillusioned by the Soviet regime, Kuzichkin was suffering from erectile dysfunction. In a desperate attempt to save his marriage he turned to MI6 and offered to spy for Britain, believing the West had medicines that could cure him."

Over a year, starting in 1981, Redwood provided MI6 officer Ian McCredie with a huge amount of high-grade intelligence.

"His most important and most alarming revelation



HANDLER: 'Redwood' with Ian McCredie

was a potential Soviet plot to overthrow the Islamist regime of Ayatollah Khomeini and replace it with Iran's communist Tudeh Party," Macintyre added.

Until Macintyre's book was published, Kuzichkin's story remained untold, although, the author had known about it for a decade.

He said: "I was told about it around 10 years ago by someone who trained at the Fort [Fort Monkton in Gosport, Hampshire, the main MI6 field operations training base] in the 1990s. I didn't really believe it, the whole story seemed so improbable. It was one of the case studies used as a teaching aid because it raises complicated, ethical questions.

"One of the interesting things about it was that so few people actually knew about it at the time, probably fewer than a dozen in MI6 and fewer than six in the CIA."

Macintyre explained: "Kuzichkin described in detail to MI6 what he called the Trojan horse in Iran: a communist underground military network with caches of weapons, money, a disciplined party organisation, a KGB sabotage plan and the strong support of the Central Committee in Moscow.

"McCredie warned MI6 that a second Iranian revolution was

brewing, this time a communist coup backed by the USSR. At any moment, like Odysseus's Greek warriors hidden inside the wooden horse within the walls of Troy, the communists could emerge and take over. Such a move would leave the Soviets in control of Iran's oil fields and the Strait of Hormuz, the Cold War nightmare long feared by western intelligence services."

Kuzichkin's codename – Redwood – was coined due to his height, Macintyre explained: "McCredie had never encountered anyone quite so tall... he towered over the British spy, swaying slightly, like a mighty tree in a gentle breeze."

Viagra

Viagra didn't exist in the early 1980s, so MI6 gave Kuzichkin vitamin pills, hoping they would act as a placebo. They didn't work, Kuzichkin confessed to his wife Galina that he was a double agent and, being a good Russian citizen, she was horrified. He couldn't count on her silence and frantic that she might betray him – the KGB would have tortured and executed him – MI6 hatched a plot for him to flee to the West, assuming the identity of diplomat Michael Road, despite his heavily-accented English. It was highly dangerous but it worked, although Vladimir and Galina's marriage didn't survive.

With his life as a spy finally behind him, Kuzichkin took on the alias of Alexander Larkin (his real father's name – he was brought up by an abusive stepfather who beat both Vladimir and his mother), and became an acupuncturist, settling in Hampshire in a house MI6 supplied. He married again and had a much longed for daughter, Elena.

Bizarrely, one of his clients was the actor Alec Guinness, who lived locally, and who famously portrayed spymaster George Smiley in the TV adaptation of John Le Carré's novel *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*. Guinness, of course, had no inkling of the former life led by the man who



REUNITED:
Vladimir Kuzichkin with the McCredies
©McCredie Family Archives

was treating him for a bad back.

Macintyre said: "As Iran erupts in violence once again, Redwood's tale could not be more timely. Here we are in a situation where Iran is being, rightly, condemned as a brutal, theocratic dictatorship, oppressing its own people, murdering them in their thousands – it's an appalling regime.

"Until the book came out the extent to which Western intelligence – MI6 and the CIA – were involved in helping to make that regime stronger hadn't really been revealed. They didn't mean to but one of the results of the Redwood case was that they helped create that regime.

"In a funny way, in order to understand what is going on in Iran and the Strait of Hormuz today you have to go back to 1981 and, at least in part, to this case."

Macintyre believes Kuzichkin, a heavy drinker, was troubled by his demons – his appalling childhood, the trauma of working as a double agent, the trauma of living in revolutionary Iran, his perilous escape to the UK – for the rest of his life.

The author said: "In 1988, MI5 received credible intelligence the KGB was preparing to send a Bulgarian hit squad to kill Kuzichkin. The family was relocated to Weston-Super-Mare where Alex Larkin continued to practise acupuncture."

In 1991, Kuzichkin had a heart attack at his home in the seaside town and died, aged 62.

Macintyre said: "I wouldn't call him a hero, I'm wary of that word, but he was remarkably brave and may even have helped to prevent nuclear Armageddon."

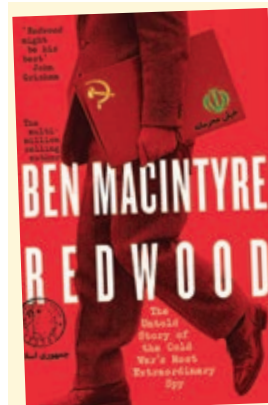
Copies up for grabs

WE HAVE copies of *Redwood* to win. For your chance to own one, tell us:

What was the name Kuzichkin used when he settled in England?

Email your answer, marked **Redwood 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 November 13.

Win!



BEST-SELLING AUTHOR: Ben Macintyre

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

Elaine Paxton has always believed in teams.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

by Ronan Thomas

RAF Kenley **Feature**

RAF's Surrey shield

Kenley, the great survivor from the days of the Battle of Britain



REMINDER: Spitfire silhouette on the dispersal bay at Kenley

KENLEY IS a place of long RAF memory – the former Air Force fighter station in Surrey stood defiantly in the frontline during the Battle of Britain. Then, Kenley's airspace resounded with Hawker Hurricane Mk I and Mk I Supermarine Spitfire Merlin engines, as the Service scrambled to intercept approaching Luftwaffe bomber streams.

On August 18, 1940, the Luftwaffe bombed Kenley with deadly accuracy. Pilots and groundcrew alike took shelter in the station's specially designed E-shaped dispersal area blast pens. Today, Kenley is a tranquil place where RAF cadet training gliders soar over its two original configuration concrete runways. It remains highly atmospheric, the best-preserved surviving Battle of Britain fighter airfield.

RAF Kenley occupies a key strategic site, 13 miles south of London. It was perfectly placed for air defence. The airfield sits on a high plateau of the North Downs, overlooking the Caterham Valley. During the Battle of Britain Hurricanes and Spitfires rose from Kenley en masse, to intercept approaching waves of Dornier Do-17, Heinkel HE-111 and Junkers JU-88 medium bombers, Messerschmitt Bf-110 fighter bombers and Bf-109E escort fighters.

It was a Sector Station, part of the RAF's effective 'Dowding System', devised by ACM Hugh Dowding and AVM Keith Park. This integrated air defence system comprised radar stations, visual reporting by the Royal Observer Corps, barrage balloons, radio eavesdropping and acoustic detectors. Aircraft intruder information was filtered

at RAF Fighter Command HQ at Bentley Priory, Stanmore. Orders then passed through Group HQs to alert squadrons. RAF No.11 (Fighter) Group at RAF Uxbridge, London was the nerve centre of operations for southern England. It controlled seven Sector Stations. Kenley held the line in Surrey.

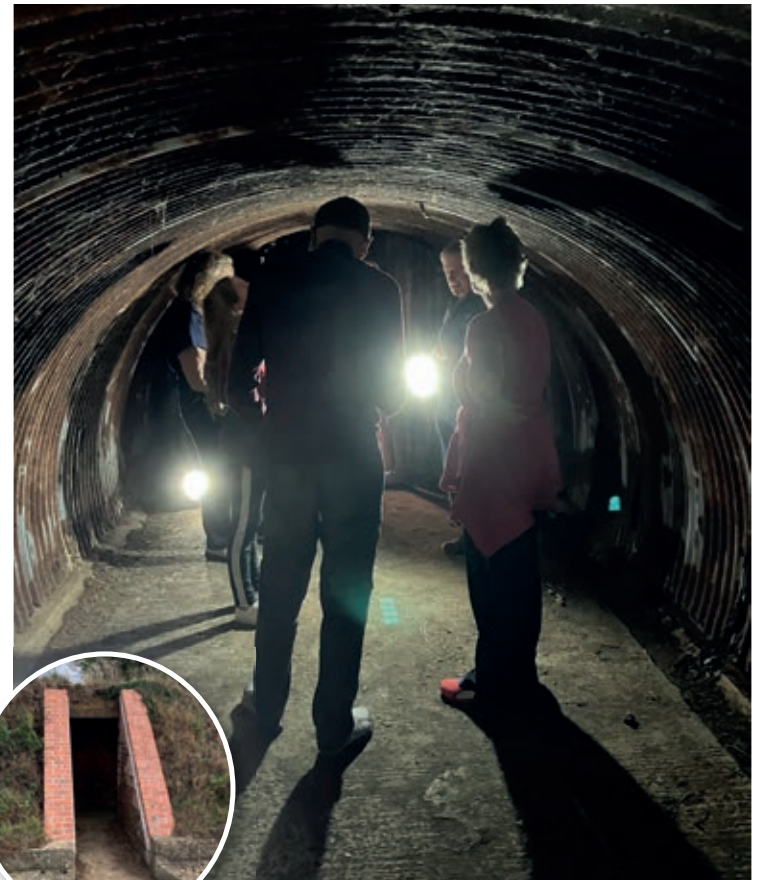
A former Royal Flying Corps airfield, Kenley became an RAF station in 1918. Construction of two runways, airfield buildings, taxiways and dispersal bay areas took place from 1939 to May 1940, just in time for the Luftwaffe's attack. As fighters

During 1940 Kenley was home to 615 Sqn (Hurricanes), 616 Sqn (Spitfires), 253 Sqn (Hurricanes), 66 Sqn (Spitfires) and 501 Sqn (Hurricanes). The station also controlled fighters from RAF Croydon, Gatwick, Redhill and Shoreham-by-Sea, a shield of interceptors down to Beachy Head on the south coast. From August 12 to September 6, 1940 the Luftwaffe concentrated on bombing 11 Group's airfields. The pressure was unrelenting. RAF Kenley was not immune. On August 18, 1940 – the so-called "Hardest Day" of the Battle of Britain, nine low-flying Dornier Do-17 bombers struck Kenley. One RAF pilot and 11 ground staff were killed and 20 injured. A Do-17 was destroyed by an anti-aircraft parachute and cable (PAC) airfield defence system. Based on a maritime rescue device, this fired a rocket with a parachute fitted on top, deploying steel cables to ensnare an aircraft's wing. RAF personnel took refuge in the blast pens.

Bombs destroyed three hangars and an equipment store, four Hurricanes and a Bristol Blenheim bomber, and four other Hurricanes were damaged. The sector operations room was knocked out. Even so, Kenley remained defiantly operational. Controllers relocated to an empty butcher's premises in Caterham. Ground crews pegged out white flags on a makeshift landing strip to guide returning RAF pilots down. Later air intelligence reports confirmed four of the attacking Dorniers were shot down.

On September 7, 1940, the Luftwaffe switched attacks to London. This took the pressure off the RAF's airfields, including Kenley. By October, the Air Force had held the Luftwaffe off over southern England in daylight.

were at their most vulnerable whilst refuelled and rearmed, 12 innovative E-shaped blast pens were constructed around Kenley's airfield perimeter. These served as air raid shelters, built in concrete with curved corrugated iron roofs and camouflaged with earth. They offered protection for 24 RAF personnel from blast, but not direct, hits. They featured heavy blast doors, bench seating, chemical lavatories and emergency escape hatches. The innovation was about to be tested, under fire.



BASIC: Blast pen interior and entrance (inset) at the RAF station

Kenley paid its own price for this victory, with 33 of its own aircrew killed.

In 1945 the advent of new RAF jet fighters, such as the Gloster Meteor and de Havilland Vampire, rendered Kenley's short runways obsolete. Film directors George More O'Farrell and Lewis Gilbert used Kenley as a location for the popular war films *Angels One Five* (1952) and *Reach for the Sky* (1956), but fighter operations ended in 1959. Coincidentally, Kenley was the birthplace of actor Peter Cushing, who played a senior RAF officer in his final film role in 1983.

RAF Kenley is both a protected Scheduled Monument and an active military site. The RAF operates 615 Volunteer Gliding Sqn, instructing air

cadets in Grob Viking T1 gliders, launched by ground winch. Its former runways, taxiways (now part of a walking, running and nature trail) and two of its historic 12 E-shaped fighter pens survive. Eight others are under restoration.

At Kenley, two fighter pen blast shelters are open to visitors each September as part of London's Open House Festival. They are highly atmospheric places, steeped in RAF memory. On my recent visit, I entered one of the blast pens through the red brick entrances and original thick, decaying, steel blast doors. I took in the confined space under the curving Nissen hut-style corrugated iron ceiling. I tried to imagine what the former RAF personnel endured there and their fortitude, during 1940. To see the Kenley runways in their original configuration also brings the vanished roar of Spitfires and Hurricanes thrillingly back to life.

What makes RAF Kenley special is not just its proud history of flight operations and innovative air defence engineering. Today, it remains the best-preserved surviving Battle of Britain fighter airfield, offering insights into the RAF's humbling resilience in Surrey at a critical period in its story. A visit there is a fascinating and reflective experience.



WINGING IT: Sign on Kenley Common



RAF News

The Forces Favourite Read

Hit your target market with **RAF News** - the official newspaper of the Royal Air Force since 1961.

Reaching an audience of more than 50,000 readers every fortnight, **RAF News** is the Forces' favourite newspaper delivering exclusive news, features and sports action from across UK Defence.

To discuss your advertising in
RAF News please call or email:
T: +44 (0)7482 571535
E: edwin.rodriques@rafnews.co.uk

RAF News

The official voice of the Royal Air Force

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

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

Letters



Fond memories of Avro Vulcan

■ I READ with interest the feature headlined **RAF in Camera 1980-1984**, in *RAF News* No: 1638, and was particularly interested as I joined the RAF on August 26, 1980.

I remember well the Vulcan flying over my first station posting, RAF Swinderby, whilst working in the Central Registry as an LAC.

I also remember, with fondness, the Lightning when it was used to celebrate passing out parades

for recruits. We used to stand on the top of SHQ and watch in awe as the Lightning went vertical, roaring into the sky, with its jet burners on full flames.

Forty-six years and still serving (as a Reservist at Valley).

Sqn Ldr Paul Dodds
RAF Valley
Anglesey

Bush flying dynasty

■ I WAS interested to read about veteran Robbie Shaw's book on the McDonnell-Douglas F-4 Phantom in *RAF News* No: 1639. Shaw was an air traffic controller in both the RAF and National Air Traffic Services, also working as a tour leader for Ian Allan Aviation Tours for some years.

I come from a Bush flying family in Zimbabwe and my late mother fought the 'system' for four years to get into the oldest African Regiment, The British South Africa Police Air Wing, until she finally became the only operational/frontline female pilot during the 'Bush War'. She was also one of the first women in Africa to get her parachute licence, and she was Chief Tasking Officer for the Police General HQ Flight (PGHQ).

My late father, after serving in the Royal Navy in World War II (also flying in Catalinas etc in Burma), was the Commander of the PGHQ flight, survived three aircraft crashes and had over 2,000 operational hours.



TRAILBLAZER: Shelagh Anderson

I took his altimeter from his first crash up in a Cessna 150 in August to see if it still worked and the pilot and I were in tears as the needle waved at heaven, despite hitting the ground fast and hard 53 years ago... staggering!

Thank you for a great newspaper, *RAF News* is an excellent read indeed.

Marko 'Zimbo' Anderson



FATHER: Police Reserve Pilot RL Anderson, back row, fourth from left
Photo: WMK Collection

Feature

New service journal for military families

THE CREATOR of a popular memory journal for veterans has brought out a companion publication, especially for British military families.

Former Serviceman Tony Carylton, who devised *My Service, My Story: A British Veteran's Guided Memory Journal*, has also produced *While You Were Away: A British Military Family Memory Journal*.

This journal gives spouses, parents, children and siblings of British Service personnel a guided, structured way to put their own side of the story into words: the goodbye, the long wait, staying connected, the milestones

missed, the fear carried quietly, and the homecoming, explained Tony.

The author, who served with the Royal Logistic Corps (Maritime) from 1994 to 1999, said the idea grew directly out of his first book.

"*My Service, My Story* gives veterans a proper way to record their service. The more I thought about it, the more I felt their families shouldn't be left out of that. They go through their own version of Service life too, in their own way, and that side rarely gets written down. This journal is my way of making sure it does," he added.

Rather than a blank notebook, the journal walks the reader through nine structured sections, each built around specific prompts rather than an empty page, with dedicated letter pages, space for photographs throughout, and a personalisation section at the front so the journal belongs to the person filling it in from the very first page.

It is available from Amazon in both paperback (rrp £9.99) and hardback (£15.99).

Based in Birmingham, Tony is also the author of a wide range of guided journals, puzzle books and practical titles for the Armed Forces community and beyond.

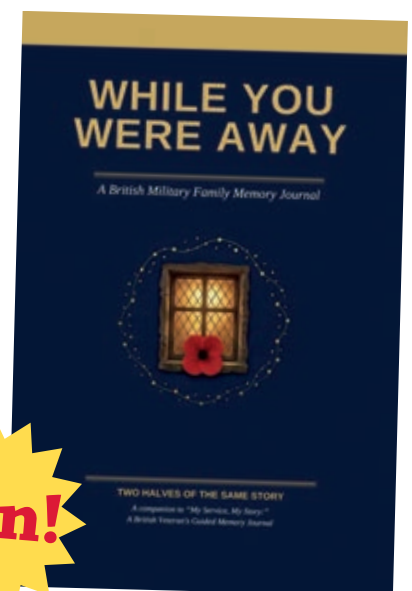
These include large-print puzzle books for seniors, activity books for children, a personal finance tracker and a keepsake baby journal.

Win!

Copy up for grabs

ONE LUCKY reader could win a copy of *While You Were Away: A British Military Family Memory Journal* in hardback. To be in with a chance of winning it, simply answer the following question correctly:

Where is author Tony Carlyon based?



JOURNAL: *While You Were Away*

Email your answer, marked Family Journal 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 November 13. Please include your full postal address with your competition entry.



THE TAYCAN is an interesting machine. From the driving seat it feels like a sports car but it's a spacious four-seater, in saloon guise. Power, agility and sportscar pedigree, repackaged into an electric vehicle (EV). It's pretty unique.

The last time I drove the Taycan, I said it was one of the most impressive EVs I'd ever encountered and so fast that literally everything else on the road (including Audis and Beamers), felt like slow obstacles that were just in your way. It hasn't got any slower and this week's test car is the new 'Black Edition'.

Exterior

Porsche has given the Taycan a recent refresh and you'll note that I use the term 'refresh', rather than 'facelift'. That's because the makeover is more like a spa day, with facial scrub, than anything surgical. Design changes are modest, with front air intakes and lighting updates the most noticeable. Beyond that, the Taycan still looks like a fast four-seater, with the usual Porsche credentials.

Interior

You slide into the Taycan's beautifully crafted cabin and it instantly feels like a sports car from the driver's seat. You sit low and everything fits perfectly around you, like a tailor-made suit. The bespoke, 'Black Edition' bucket seats hug you reassuringly in place and you grip the chunky Porsche steering wheel that sits almost in front of you, with a grin. The whole aura is of a tech-heavy, precision-built racing machine.

Screens surround you, like a stealth-fighter cockpit, with the curved instrument binnacle taking precedence. Sharp graphics display lots of useful information about actual engineering data, things like the battery state, temperature and potential charge speed. Useful quick-access controls for things you need, like lights, suspension and stability control (ESP) sit within easy reach, to balance out the complex menu system.

The central infotainment display carries the majority of the Taycan's space-age functions, supported by a further screen, below the air vents, that is



ELECTRIC: The performance of the Porsche Taycan remains scintillating

A real live wire

primarily concerned with climate control. You can however configure it to be used as a touchpad to control the upper screen, which means you have a screen to control a screen, plus all the other screens. There's also a further touchscreen in the back for rear seat passengers to control their climate settings, with an optional front passenger display, a head-up display and two displays on the back of the front headrests for rear-seat entertainment available. As I said, more screens than a stealth-fighter!

Rear seats are surprisingly spacious, with contoured chairs for two. You won't comfortably fit three, so it's not a limousine like the Panamera, but there's plenty of leg room. Headroom isn't generous, because you're in a sportscar... Duh! For this level of performance, you'll cope.

On the road

The Taycan is seriously quick. Depending on the model, its performance ranges from fast to light-speed (or warp-factor 9, in Trekkie lingo). The Black Edition sits towards the more usable end, with rear-wheel-drive and a power output of 435hp. Unless you're planning on making the jump to hyperspace, it's rapid enough, believe me. 0-62mph in 4.5 and a top end of 143mph.

Porsche Taycan Black Edition

Pros

- Breathtaking performance and razor-sharp handling
- Impressive battery range
- Stupidly fast recharging
- Stonking interior quality

Cons

- You'll need deep pockets, especially with options (our test car weighed in at £104,729)
- Cutting-edge technology yet to be fully tested

Verdict

THE TAYCAN is seriously quick and it handles incredibly well. It has all the usual exterior charisma that you'd expect from a Porsche and the interior is pure German class. It's available with one of the longest



official ranges you can get and the leap in charging technology makes it one of the fastest EV pit-stops on the market. Whichever version you go for, it won't come cheap, but if you're looking for a brilliant EV that handles like a thoroughbred sportscar, the Porsche Taycan is in the top few.

In real terms, it feels somewhat like the six-cylinder Cayman, in power delivery terms, and that makes it a sportscar that's perfectly matched to spirited driving on UK roads.

The automatic two-ratio transmission, combined with plenty of instant power and a low drag coefficient, mean that

Taycans absolutely fly and they don't run out of acceleration towards the top end. 62mph to 125mph takes seconds, it's properly quick.

Air-sprung suspension is now the default set-up for the Taycan, with an aluminium set-up of double wishbones at the front and multi-link at the rear. It remains

immensely secure through the bends, with otherworldly traction on the out. The back end is playful and the electric traction control is subtle enough to let you push the boundaries. The Taycan is, therefore, one of the most fun EV sportscars on the market.

The steering is consistently Porsche, operating with solid precision. It weights up nicely too, so the Taycan is easy to place exactly where you want it to go. Body-roll? It's a low-slung Porsche, you won't find that sort of thing here.

Beneath the skin you'll find the most impressive upgrades. Range has been extended to 409 miles on a charge, thanks to a bigger battery, and it's got faster. In this context, I'm not talking about top speed. Your journey will be faster because the Taycan can now charge at a higher power rate, this means you can travel further on a charge and spend far less time at a charger, especially if you use one of the new IONITY chargers.

IONITY is a joint venture between Porsche, BMW, Ford, Hyundai, Kia, Mercedes Benz, Volkswagen and Audi. These chargers kick out a stonking 600kW and I found the Taycan bounced back to 80 per cent charge on one in less than 10 minutes during one stop. We're talking fast.

Our sporting elite



SPEED MACHINE: AS1 Cam Tindle (left) is the 100m and 200m IS champion
PHOTO: GRAEME MAIN



MASTER STROKE: Swimmer Cpl Kyle Booth enjoyed Inter-Services success
PHOTO: GRAEME MAIN

Daniel Abrahams

BE IT winter Olympians, international hockey and rugby stars, IS winning teams or dedicated officials, this year's RAF Sports Awards has it all.

Year on year the event, which brings together the great and good of RAF sport, seems to somehow outdo the previous and the 2026 line-up is no exception, with the winners revealed at a gala luncheon at the RAF Club in London's Piccadilly.

Featuring 11 categories from teams, to officials, to the blue riband sportsman and woman of the year, this year's awards include a RAF Sport Special Recognition for England and RAF rugby union star Flt Lt Amy Cokayne.

Cokayne, who has won 94 England caps, celebrated her third World Cup win last year and played a major part in the Red Roses' run of 39 victories, which ended with the recent 26-26 WXV draw against Canada.

Battling it out for sportsman of the year was Wales Commonwealth Games swimmer Cpl Kyle Booth, who produced a semi-final finish in the 50m breaststroke, finishing 13th overall and secured a finals berth as part of the 4x100m individual medley, before helping RAF Swimming to its first



PACKING A PUNCH:
RAF Boxers

Inter-Services win since 2018.

Triathlete Sgt Adam Baker enjoyed considerable success, including an IS time trial championship runner-up spot, a first in the IS masters 10km Road Race, British Masters 5km Championships runner-up and British Masters Half Marathon win.

Athlete AS1 Cam Tindle narrowly missed out on Commonwealth Games selection for Scotland but was crowned Scottish Men's Senior 60m Champion. He retained his Inter Service titles in the 100m and 200m and men's 4 x 100m relay gold. Tindle led the relay team at this year's Royal Highland Games in Braemar, personally receiving the trophy from His Majesty the King.

The sports woman of the year was

yet another stellar battle with winter Olympian Flt Lt Nicole Burger (below left) heading the nominations after representing her country, South Africa, at the Milan Cortina games after just five years in the sport.

Having started as a novice for the RAF in 2019, she has forged an incredible path across Europe, winning the North American Cup title and having qualified for the Italian games she went on to become the first female athlete to represent South Africa in skeleton at an Olympics.

Cpl Charlotte Goodman set a benchmark in her sport of diving in 2026, winning her fourth consecutive Inter-Services titles in both springboard and platform diving. Her success extended on to the international stage at the Croatia Open Masters Championships, where she delivered a dominant display, winning every individual event she entered. Goodman topped out the year by becoming RAF Diving team manager.

Representing Wales, AS1 Alexandra Naughalty has had a groundbreaking year. Having headed a field of

50 triallists for Wales Over-35s Masters squad selection, she went on to represent Wales at the Indoor World Cup, Four Nations Tournament and Outdoor World Cup, earning the prestigious Coaches' Player of the Tournament award at both competitions.

Other notable nominations were the RAF Boxing Elite Team, while Flt Lt Burger's winter Olympic coach and former RAF skeleton OIC Flt Lt Rhys Thornbury was included in the Head RAF Sport Award category.

The Coach/Officials award was fought out between esports coach AS1 (T) Stelios Elia, cricket official Flt Lt Grace Bambury and WXV Rugby Union official Flt Lt Rebecca Piddlesden.

● See p3 for news on the big winners on the day.



SPECIAL AWARD:
Rugby's Amy Cokayne

The nominees

Sportsman of the year:

Triathlon: Sgt Adam Baker
Swimming: Cpl Kyle Booth
Athletics: AS1 Cameron Tindle

Sportswoman of the year

Swimming: Sgt Charlotte Goodman
Skeleton: Flt Lt Nicole Burger
Hockey: AS1 Alexandra Naughalty

Sport Team

RAF Boxing Elite Team

Coach/Official

Esports: AS1 (T) Stelios Elia
Cricket: Flt Lt Grace Bambury
Rugby Union: Flt Lt Rebecca Piddlesden

Sport Administrator

Winter Sports: Air Cdre Martin Cunningham
Cricket: Wg Cdr Pippa Le Cras
Strongman and Strongwoman: Sgt Stephen Winter

Endeavour Award

RAF Shawbury Gliding Team
WO John Speirs
AS1 Isabel Weaver

Civilian Volunteer – All to receive an award

American Football: Warren Smart
Motorsports: Shane Colbrook
Athletics: Steven Potter

Lifetime Achievement Awards

Small Arms: Wg Cdr (Ret'd) Chris Hockley
Triathlon: Sgt Sue Pugh
Basketball: WO Samantha Williams
Football: Cpl Daniel Dixon
Motorsports: Gp Capt Brian Watson
Football: Sqd Ldr Martin Wilkinson

Head RAF Sport Award

Skeleton: Flt Lt Rhys Thornbury

RAF Sport Special Recognition

Rugby Union: Flt Lt Amy Cokayne

RAF Central Fund Award

RAF Shawbury

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

ATHLETICS

Over-40 'veteran' sets new Service distance record

Old-hand Sgt Baker Masters RAF Half Marathon

Daniel Abrahams

SERVICE MARATHON records were scattered to the winds at this year's RAF Half Marathon Championship, hosted as part of the Great Eastern Half Marathon.

A field of 28 RAF athletes produced some exceptional performances, led by Sgt Adam Baker, who delivered a superb run to take the overall RAF title in one hour five minutes and 54 seconds.

He said: "I'm really pleased to take the RAF Half Marathon Championship title against some quality competition. I was really pushed right to the line. Training

had gone well, and I thought I was in good shape, but I was surprised to improve my PB by 2 minutes and 16 seconds. PBs in your 40s are harder to come by, hopefully I have more to come."

The women's championship was led by Sgt Alison Spencer, who took the RAF Women's Open title in 1:32:07.

She said: "I was delighted to win the RAF Women's Half Marathon Championships and achieve a PB. The course was flat and fast, with a fantastic atmosphere created by the local community."

"Sport has always been a big part of my life, both in running and equestrian sport, and brings



CHAMPS: Part of the Great Eastern Half Marathon

great fulfilment alongside my role as an RAF musician.

"I really value how inclusive and welcoming RAF sport is and I am looking forward to competing in the RAFAA cross-country leagues this season."

Cpl Becca Bracher followed in 1:44:25, with AS1 Sophie Hunt completing the podium in 1:52:59.

Sgt Fran Parsons took the Women's Masters 35 title in 1:54:53, while Cpl Joshua Armsworth won the Men's U23 Championship in 1:26:18.

Baker's result represented a personal best of more than two minutes, improving on his previous best of 1:08:15, and in doing so established a new RAF Championship best and RAF record.

His performance surpassed the previous championship best of 1:06:21, set by Gp Capt Ben Livesey in 2012, and also improved substantially on Baker's own 1:08:35 performance at the 2025 Championships.

At 41, Baker was also crowned RAF Men's Masters 40 Champion with Sqn Ldr Tom Bailey the 2nd Master 40 home, in 1:12:55.

Flt Lt Michael Kallenberg pushed Baker all the way, producing an outstanding 1:06:03 to take second place, just nine seconds behind.

Flt Lt Chris Davies completed an exceptionally strong podium, finishing third in 1:09:06.

MAN OF THE

MOMENT:

Sgt Adam Baker stormed to victory in the RAF event, setting a new record



HIGH NOTE: RAF musician and equestrian Sgt Alison Spencer (right) took women's title





ICE HOCKEY

Ice stars ready to face off

RIVALRY:
Bluewings and
Lossie Jets
PHOTO: TRISH
THOMPSON

RAF BLUEWINGS will be looking to fly higher than their competitors at this year's Ice Hockey Championship at Vindico Arena, Cardiff.

The annual tournament sees the Service's four regional teams – RAF Stars, RAF Bluewings, RAF Vulcans and Lossiemouth Jets – face each other for action-packed games.

For the second year, there is also a Masters clash and the event is closed with the association's annual end of season dinner and awards ceremony.

RAF Ice Hockey deputy chair Flt Lt Tom Yeoman said: "RAF Champs is the pinnacle of our calendar, and a great week that brings members from across the Association together to compete and celebrate the achievements of the year.

"With the RAF Bluewings looking to defend their Championship title, and the

Masters event entering its second year since its successful revival, there is plenty to look forward to.

"What stands out most is the continued growth of the Association and the enthusiasm of those who volunteer their many hours of time and effort to make it such a great place to be."

● Follow RAF Ice Hockey via @RAFIcehockey on Instagram.

FOOTBALL

Falkland Islanders Chile hot

"OUR DISPLAY did the Services proud," BFSAI team captain Capt Tomlin said after his side's 3-1 defeat at the hands of Falkland Islands FC.

Team spokesperson Flt Lt Albert Williams added: "We can leave the pitch with our heads held high," following the annual fixture between FIFC and British Forces South Atlantic Islands.

Arriving with a 20-man squad featuring several debutants, the military men created several early opportunities.

What the Service team lacked in front of goal they made up for in effort, leaving the pitch to a standing ovation.

The second half continued in the same fashion, with both sides guilty of squandering chances, before the deadlock was broken just after the hour mark as the hosts saw a cross drift in the net.

The military men levelled after 78 minutes, but seven minutes later the islanders led and two minutes after that it was game over as they netted a third.

Williams added: "While the result went in favour of the hosts, we could take considerable positives from the performance. Against an opposition preparing for an overseas tour to Chile in 2027, we showed significant improvement, greater organisation and a good level of determination."

FOOTBALL

Win over Germany is one to remember for UKAF women

Bundeswehr Women	1
UKAF Women	4

Staff Reporter

THE UK Armed Forces women footballers completely dismantled their German counterparts, winning 4-1 at the Julius Leber Barracks to insure back-to-back Remembrance wins.

Team captain Sgt Cat Beaver (RAF) said: "I'm really proud of the girls and the staff, everybody has put the effort in. People are working hard in their civilian teams as well to stay fit and the staff sent us out with a plan and we executed that and came away with a win."

Following a 1-1 draw in 2023, a 1-0 loss in 2024 and their 3-1

win in the UK in 2025, FS Karl Milgate's charges produced a display of absolute dominance throughout, playing the tricky damp conditions superbly to secure their biggest winning margin yet in the annual fixture.

Early pressure on the right wing led to an early breakthrough as a hurried German cross field clearance only found UKAF left back Pvt Sasha Clare.

Unmarked and under no pressure, she chested the high ball down and with an agricultural shot-cum clearance smashed home from 35 yards.

The German keeper, who should never have been beaten for the opener, was found wanting minutes later as she failed to collect the slippery high ball from a UKAF corner and Beaver bundled home for a comfortable

2-0 scoreline at the break.

Further poor defending led a foul out wide in the opening stages of the second half with Sgt Katie Elwood nodding home the first of her brace for 3-1.

The fourth and final goal for the visitors was a master class in control and passing, with Elwood calmly slotting home after a series of pinpoint passes carved open the hosts' defence.

Bundeswehr's Sarah Begunk fired home from 25 yards for a memorable consolation goal.

● LATE PENALTY heroics from AS1 Matt Laycock could not save UKAF men from a 4-3 defeat in Germany after a seven-goal thriller in Berlin.

Having fought back to lead 3-2 in the German capital, UKAF, featuring four RAF stars

Bundeswehr Men	4
UKAF Men	3

in its starting line-up – Laycock, Cpl Sam Dawson, Flt Lt Aaron Eyett and Cpl Joe Spalding – then succumbed to two late penalties.

Team coach Chf Tech Lewis Brownhill said: "It's always tough going away to Germany, but the boys applied themselves well and have given us a few headaches for future selection.

"Unfortunately, we didn't get the win and that's what this team has been used to over the last eight years. Overall, it was a great fixture and fantastic preparation for next month's Kentish Cup in France."

Cpl George Bishop's header was redirected by LPT Josh

McCormack to get one back as the visitors began to build up a head of steam.

AS1 Josh Randall levelled and a goal for the ages from team captain CPO Danny Kerr curling in from 20 yards saw the visitors lead.

Looking to see the game out, UKAF conceded the first of two penalties in five closing minutes, leaving aviator Laycock no chance.

Having been harshly judged with conceding the second penalty, Laycock duly saved the spot kick diving well to his right after German captain Tille had struck a weak effort.

Moments later Laycock was beaten on his near post by Leon Petersen and the game was done with UKAF unable to produce any further efforts on goal.

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

ALPINE

Aviators are getting a march on winter

Daniel Abrahams

THE SUN may have been shining outside, but for personnel taking to the indoor slopes in Castleford it was a winter wonderland.

More than 100 participants from across the RAF and University Air Squadrons came together to enjoy a packed programme of skiing, snowboarding and competition.

Air Cdre Martin Cunningham, the RAF Winter Sports Alpine Association chairman, said: "Castleford has delivered again: fantastic participation, loads of new faces learning, training and racing alongside our seasoned competitors and, most importantly, people getting amongst it on the 'snow' well ahead of the season."

Waddington's Wg Cdr Natalie beat AS1 Jazmine (Brize) and Leeming's Cpl Lara into second and third place respectively in the snowboard event. Northolt's Sgt Ian took the men's event over FS Reece (Lossiemouth) and AS1(T) Kieran (Leeming).

Brize Norton's Cpl Melissa took the women's ski event, with APO Josephine (OUAS) second and Cpl Ella (Digby) third. AS1 John from Leeming took the men's event with Cpl Dan (Leeming) second and Flt Lt



THERE'S SNOW ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY: Personnel sharpen their skills on slopes



PHOTOS: AS1 RICHARD DILWORTH

William (Birmingham UAS) third. The Inter-Station Ski Competition went to Waddington, with Brize Norton

second and Coningsby third. With the festival complete, the association turns its attention from the indoor slopes to the

mountains for Exercise Alpine Challenge in January.

● To find out more about winter sports, follow the association

on Facebook @RAFWSAA or SharePoint: Search for RAF Winter Sports Alpine Association (RAF WSAA).

GRIDIRON

There's no flagging from personnel at gridiron camp

THE FUTURE of service NFL is bright after another bumper three-day flag football camp at Wattisham Flying Station in Suffolk.

The camp, where experienced players and beginners developed their skills, brought together RAF players and introduced six debutants to the sport for two days of training before mixed fixtures against Army teams on the final day.

For many of the newcomers, the camp at the former RAF station marked their first experience of handling an American football, providing a non-contact version of the game to try out.

Team captain quarterback Cpl James Taylor (pictured inset) said: "By the end of the opening day, players who had arrived with little or no knowledge of the game were successfully running routes and executing plays as part of a coordinated team."

"Despite the short preparation time, the RAF team performed strongly during mixed games on the final day. The rapid improvement

demonstrated by the rookies highlighted both the accessibility of the sport and was a testament to our coaches and veteran players' skills."

One RAF attendee said: "It was a really fun experience and the quality of the coaching and the structure of the training sessions made it easy to learn, even in a short period of time. I am definitely interested in attending more events."

Wakeford added: "With flag football set to make its Olympic debut at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games, interest in the sport is expected to continue rising. We hope to build on that momentum by encouraging more personnel to get involved and experience a sport that combines athleticism, strategy and teamwork in a welcoming and inclusive environment."

● To find out more about future camps and the association contact RAF American Football at rafaf.flag@gmail.com or follow @rafamericanfootball on social media.



RIVALRY: Games were held against Army on last day

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

5 RAF Sport

pages of

MOTORSPORT

It's our Turner gain



Dean and team retake the Inter-Services title

Daniel Abrahams

DONINGTON PARK witnessed the RAF Motorcycle Road Racing team regaining the Inter-Services title by 140 points in the No Limits Racing series.

They took four of the top five independent finishes at the Derbyshire track, with Sgt Dean Turner winning the individual championship on 175 points, 10 clear of Army rider Sgt Sam Foster.

Making up the top five championship finishes were WO Alan Sharp (138), who came home in third, while Cpl Ethan Hall was fourth on 124 and AS1 Piotr Gawaluch fifth on 122 points.

Sharp said: "All the riders were not only involved in their own individual championships, with tough races against civilian riders, but teamwise our main goal was to regain the IS title that

we 'loaned' to the Army last year."

The team of 19 RAF riders were ready for battle at the damp track with Turner looking to finish in the top 10 to ensure the individual IS title and Sharp gunning for a good finish to secure third place in the individual championship.

Turner, having already sealed the Ol Skool 1000cc title before race start, was struggling with a misfiring engine going into qualifying. Engine issues aside, he managed to secure second on the grid, while Sharp ended up fourth on the starting line to bolster both riders' hopes.

The duo was ably backed up by the remaining team members, who made up six of the front 10 grid places.

For the race actual, strong starts by the front five riders for the 12 laps saw Turner in the mix, but the tight racing almost cost



DONNY DOWNPOUR:
Riders battle the rain
©CAMIPIX Photography

the aviator dear, as he came close to a collision with a back marker.

With the opening straight dramas out of the way, the race

itself was simple for the aviators, with Turner coming home safely in fourth at the chequered flag, while Sharp crossed the line in

eighth assuring his third-place championship finish.

● Follow the team on Facebook @rafmotorcycleroad racing

ROWING



PAIRS: RAF women rowers



MIXED DOUBLES WINNERS:
Sgt Ben Kerry and Cpl Jemma Terrey

Women retain coxed four crown

Daniel Abrahams

THERE WAS a super six of wins and the RAF women retained their coxed four IS crown at the Joint Services Rowing Regatta in Peterborough.

Air Force rowers produced a superb late rally after a day of fiercely contested racing at the annual Tri-Service showdown, with crews competing over the 1,000m course across novice, improver, masters, open and Inter-Service events.

The day was not initially going the aviators' way but they turned things around late in the afternoon to take the women's open single scull and pair, men's open coxed four, men's masters double scull and the mixed double scull, as well as the most important prize of the day as the Women's Inter-Service coxed four successfully defended their title.

A well-fought men's eight also saw the RAF finish second



CHAMPIONS: Women's coxed four with trophy

behind the Royal Navy in one of the races of the regatta.

The women's eight provided similar drama, with the RAF and Army separated by the finest of margins at the finish.

RAF Rowing vice-chair Sqn Ldr Chris Nash said: "Those races typified a highly competitive regatta in which small margins repeatedly decided the outcome."

"While the RAF relinquished some of the honours won in previous

seasons, the late surge of six victories across sweep rowing and sculling demonstrated the breadth of talent across the club, while the women's four win ensured an Inters title remained in RAF hands.

"Attention now turns to Breda, where RAF crews begin the transition into the head-racing season and the longer road towards defending the Forces Pennant at the Head of the River Race next spring."



LIVING WITH PAIN AFTER SERVICE?

If you served and are now living with pain, Help for Heroes can help.

We know pain can impact every part of daily life, disrupt your sleep and take a toll on your mental health.

Our clinical team, including nurses, occupational therapists and medical advisers, can work with you to understand your needs and explore practical support.

Get in touch with Help for Heroes today to find out more about how we can support you.

helpforheroes.org.uk/painawarenessmonth
0300 303 9888



**HELP for
HEROES**

R'n'R

Suits you! – The Fast Show live

● See page 4

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



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

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



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

**COMBAT
STRESS**
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH



Museums

Wildwood: The Exhibition

The Design Museum, until Jan 10, 2027

THE DESIGN Museum has opened LAIKA presents Wildwood: The Exhibition, created in collaboration with Portland, Oregon-based stop-motion animation studio LAIKA.

This new exhibition follows the recent premiere of *Wildwood*, directed by Travis Knight, at the BFI London Film Festival, where the film attracted widespread critical acclaim.

A Museum spokesperson said: "The exhibition explores the development and making of *Wildwood*, from early visual research and concept art to character design, puppet fabrication, miniature set construction, animation and cinematography."

"After more than 20 years of creating acclaimed animated films, including *Coraline* (2009) and *Kubo and the Two Strings* (2016), LAIKA has developed a distinctive approach to stop-motion filmmaking. Bringing together 170 objects from the studio's archive, the show reveals how artists, designers, model makers, engineers and animators collaborate to create richly



detailed cinematic worlds."

The spokesperson added: "Visitors will get a behind-the-scenes look at the creative and technical processes involved in building a stop-motion world. The exhibition brings together original creative material, production objects, costumes, filmmaking tools, audio-visual content and interactive installations, revealing the work of the visual development artists, model makers, scenic painters, and more."

LAIKA's films are created

The puppet masters



by stop motion, the cinematic practice of photographing real, three-dimensional objects in constructed environments, with puppets moved incrementally between frames. The exhibition examines how handcraft and technology work together across this process, from intricate costumes and mechanical armatures to miniature sets, animation rigs, lighting and camera techniques.

Highlights include one of the

original puppets used in *Coraline* (2009), displayed alongside the interchangeable faces that gave the character her range of expressions.

David Burke, LAIKA's Chief Marketing and Operations Officer, said: "*Wildwood* represents everything LAIKA believes animation can be: emotionally resonant, visually ambitious and made by artists, craftspeople and technical innovators working at the highest level."

"This exhibition gives audiences a rare opportunity to see the extraordinary artistry and ingenuity behind the film, from its puppets and costumes to its sets and environments and to understand how thousands of individual creative decisions come together to build a cinematic world."

● **Wildwood: The Exhibition runs until January 10, 2027. Go to: designmuseum.org for ticket details.**



Film Review

Ghosts: The Possession of Button House (PG)

Out now

This is on the Button

FANS OF the hit TV series *Ghosts* – and they are legion – were delighted at the news their beloved show was coming to the big screen. And they shouldn't be disappointed.

Ghosts: The Possession of Button House is as funny and entertaining as the TV show and features familiar much-loved characters played by the same actors – including Simon Farnaby as MP Julian Fawcett, Jim Howick as Scout Master Pat Butcher and Lolly Adefope as posh Georgian Kitty.

As with all five series of the small screen version, the film is a real ensemble effort, with the screenplay written by Farnaby, Howick and fellow cast members Ben Willbond (*The Captain*), Laurence Rickard (caveman Robin and Sir Humphrey Bone's head) and Martha Howe-Douglas (*Lady Fanny Button*).

In the final episode of the TV series the ghosts persuaded Alison and Mike Cooper (Charlotte Ritchie and Kiell Smith-Bynoe) to sell Button House (in real-life West Horsley Place in Surrey – the Grade I listed medieval manor house left to the late *University Challenge* quizmaster Bamber Gascoigne in 2014 by his great-aunt, Mary, Duchess of Roxburghe).

The film sees the ghosts still waiting for Button House to be converted into a



A SPECTRE-CAL: The ghosts of Button House

luxury hotel and golf resort, but a group of environmental protesters have turned up, trying to stop the development.

Three teenagers arrive, in search of spooky entertainment at what they think is a deserted old property. But one of them, Jack (Scott Ellis Watson) becomes possessed by Julian and, for the first time since the 80s, Julian escapes the confines of Button House.

The ghosts then get caught up in a race against time to save their home and young Jack's life. Alison and Mike, who now have baby Mia, are, to say the least, astonished when Julian turns up at their home asking for help.

The cast are superb, as always, and Sian Clifford (*Fleabag*, *Ludwig*) delivers a great supporting performance as a duplicitous protestor.

The movie is a satisfying follow-up for long-term *Ghosts* faithfuls and a great way to introduce those unfamiliar with the gang to the TV series – ideal for a Halloween cinema trip.

Four out of five roundels ●●●●
Review by Tracey Allen



Film Review

Wild Horse Nine (15)

In cinemas Nov 6 (previews Nov 4/5)

Loose-tongued spook

JUST BEFORE the 1973 Chilean coup, two CIA operatives take a week's holiday on Easter Island, to unwind and see the iconic 'big heads' – but the real reason they're here will test their friendship.

Chris (John Malkovich) is seeing out his days, constantly talking to trusted colleague Lee (Sam Rockwell) about writing his memoir. Considering he is connected to various presidential assassinations, including JFK's in the world of the film, it's maybe not in the department's interest to allow this to happen.

Sharing much of the lifeblood of McDonagh's previous films, particularly *In Bruges*, *Wild Horse Nine* is built on hilarious back and forth exchanges

between its leads. Rockwell is funny even without words, reacting incredulously to Chris's obnoxious and unfiltered musings, such as the connection between democratic countries' nice cheeses and their gayness.

Malkovich's mannered way of speaking is slowed even more as Chris, symptomatic of his cancer diagnosis maybe, or the morphine that he takes to manage the pain. Either way his memory is slipping and his lips are loosening. Lee aims to keep them both out of trouble, but whether his affinity is with his friend or his bureau chief MJ (Steve Buscemi) is unclear.

Growing something of a conscience in these late stages, Chris appears to be more sensitive to the lives of moths than the dozens of people he has dispatched.

It is not a very serious film and wears this proudly. For all of its glib remarks about real historical atrocities, it uses them as a shortcut to understand, and perhaps even care for, these otherwise repugnant Yanks.

Wild Horse Nine is sharply written and expertly performed, a treat to just spend time in these characters' company, even if they are the worst kind of people.

4 out of 5 roundels ●●●●
Review by Sam Cooney



SHADY: CIA agents Chris (Malkovich) and Lee (Rockwell)

R'n'R



Theatre
The Fast Show
UK and Ireland tour



SUITS YOU: Saucy stitchers Mark Williams (left) and Paul Whitehouse

The Fast Show: tailor-made for '90s nostalgia

IT'S ALMOST unbelievable that it's more than 30 years since *The Fast Show* finished its original BBC run – now fans of the hit Nineties sketch show are in for a treat as co-creators Paul Whitehouse and Charlie Higson reunite with Simon Day, John Thomson, Mark Williams and Arabella Weir to bring *An Evening With The Fast Show* to UK and Ireland theatres next year.

The 23-date UK tour starts on February 1, and includes a stop at the legendary Eventim Apollo Hammersmith on February 28, before culminating at Dublin's 3 Olympia on March 3, 2027.

Paul Whitehouse said: "Ooh suits you! Looks like we're back on the road in 2027 with *An Evening with The Fast Show*."

Charlie Higson said: "Who'd have thought it – over 30 years later and we're still going strong. We had so much fun being back out on the road that we've decided to do it all over again."

An Evening with The Fast Show is a celebration of the enduring appeal of the TV sketch show and the laughter it has brought to millions. Audiences will join the original cast members for a glimpse behind the scenes and relive some of the award-winning sketch show's iconic characters and catchphrases including the Suits You



CO-CREATOR: Comic Paul Whitehouse

Sir tailors, Swiss Toni, Ted and Ralph, Does My Bum Look Big In This, Competitive Dad and many more.

The cast will chat together about how it all began, how they made the TV show and created the characters, and the fun they had doing it. This will be interspersed with performances of some of their best-loved sketches, monologues and songs, with on-screen inserts and a moment to remember their former collaborator, the late, great Caroline Aherne.

The Fast Show first aired on BBC2 on September 27, 1994 and became one of the nation's best-loved comedy shows, having a huge influence on subsequent TV sketch shows.

● **Go to:** thefastshow.live for full tour and ticket details.

LADIES' MAN: Charlie Higson as slippery car salesman Swiss Toni



TV
The Northumbria Mysteries
BBC

BIG NAMES:
Robson Green as Joe Ruby, with mentor Father Davis (Simon Callow) and Liz White as DI Rose O'Connell (inset below right)



GRANTCHESTER STAR
Robson Green leads the cast of *The Northumbria Mysteries* – a new BBC detective drama.

Set in the glorious Northumberland countryside, at the heart of the show is an unlikely crime-solving duo, ex-con Joe Ruby (Green) and Oxford-educated DI Rose O'Connell (Liz White).

She's an intellectual with an ice-cool disposition, he meanwhile has been on the wrong side of the law for much of his life but is now trying to make amends and move to the right side.

Joe is a volunteer at a local priory, tending to the grounds, seeking forgiveness and attempting to start a new life, all under the kind but watchful eye of Father David (Simon Callow).

When the body of one of the monks is found hastily buried in a remote part of the priory grounds, super-smart DI O'Connell and her 'green' second-in-command DS Raj Singh (Gurjeet Singh) are sent to investigate. The mysterious circumstances make it a tricky case to solve but when Joe comes up with some unusual insights from his own dodgy past, Rose senses that she might have a useful ally.

Helen Munson, Commissioning Editor for BBC Daytime, said: "If you like your drama to have a weekly dose of clever mystery and a unique but likeable crime fighting duo at its heart, then *The Northumbria Mysteries* is your new binge watch.

"Set along the coastline and in the countryside of beautiful Northumberland, expect murder, intrigue and a reluctant duo who just can't help getting in each other's way."

Green said of his character: "He is a guy seeking redemption. He's a gambler and a risk taker and someone who has always been lured into temptation despite having a good heart and wanting to do the right thing. He's a charmer, but he's fallible and through the choices he has made along the way he has lost everything."

The actor especially enjoyed filming in Northumberland – he lives in Hexham. "I've never had a job where I could just go back and forth from home before....it was just joyous spending so much time in the local area, it was such a nice familiar vibe," he said. "We were wandering around and I thought 'what's the catch' – it was perfect."

"I particularly enjoyed Bamburgh Castle and Budle Bay. My dad used to have a caravan and we'd go there so it brought back loads of lovely memories. We'd go swimming in the bay together. We both liked cold water swimming, I still do."

White (*Unforgotten*, *Ackley Bridge*) described Rose, as "dedicated to her job".

She explained: "She is an experienced detective who has moved to Northumberland and taken a post in the force up there. She believes in an evidence-based approach and is less inclined to act on instinct than her younger, less experienced colleague, DS Raj Singh. She lives alone and, as a way to meet new people in the area, she embarks on a series of unsuccessful dates. She has an understated confidence in her ability to reach justice."

White (left) added: "I suppose I have been subliminally inspired by all the female coppers I have seen on TV over the years. Helen Mirren in *Prime Suspect* and Anna Carteret as Juliet Bravo stand out. Rose is a grafter and gives the air at least of being the smartest person in the room. Gordon Anderson,



Green rass of me for obson



the director of our first block of filming, always used to remind me that Rose was the hero so if I ever had any doubts I would bear that in mind!

"Getting this role also coincided with my daughter's developing interest in murder mystery programmes and so I had unknowingly been researching crime dramas for a couple of years. It all came in handy!

"Northumberland is staggeringly beautiful. Every single location we visited took my breath away. There was one particular week where we filmed at Bamburgh Castle and Dunstanburgh Castle, one after the other. We were also extremely lucky with the weather. We were shooting a car chase, with Bamburgh in the background. The sun was cracking the flags, the clouds were dramatic landscapes in the sky, the fields of rape were glowing either side of the road. All the crew were local and the pride in where they came from was palpable. It is a beautiful place to film."

● **The Northumbria Mysteries** continues on BBC One at 2pm and is available on iPlayer: bbc.co.uk/iplayer.



PARTNERS: Rose with her less-experienced sidekick DS Raj Singh (Gurjeet Singh)



Music
Del Amitri
UK talk tour

Scots rockers Del Amitri talk the talk

DEL AMITRI founding members Justin Currie and Iain Harvie are hitting the road next spring for what's been described as an intimate and unscripted evening of conversation.

The new tour, featuring storytelling and reflection, is titled *Del Amitri – 45 Years Of Modest Failure: An Evening of Conversation with Justin Currie & Iain Harvie* – a nod to the band's dry wit.

The tour begins in Bury St Edmunds on March 20, 2027 and finishes on June 20 in Bude, Cornwall, taking in dates at venues including High Wycombe (April 2), Edinburgh (June 3) and Lincoln (June 13).

As the driving creative force behind hits such as *Roll to Me*, *Always the Last To Know*, and *Nothing Ever Happens*, singer Justin and guitarist Iain have shared more than four decades of songwriting, world tours and band history.

Now they are stepping away from the amps to share candid tales from life on the road and inside the studio. From their early



45-YEAR PARTNERSHIP: Del Amitri's Justin Currie (left) and Iain Harvie

Glasgow origins to international stardom, audiences will discover the true stories behind the music, the triumphs, and the challenges that shaped one of Scotland's most enduring rock bands, said a spokesperson.

The second half of the show belongs to fans, who can bring their questions for a live, interactive Q&A session where no topic is off limits.

Justin said: "Having ventured into book tour world last year, I was amazed by how enjoyable and heartwarming an evening of conversation with Del Amitri's audience could be.

"After years of rubbish stage patter, it felt like a release to be able to open up a little and have time to engage directly with people, if not breaking the fourth wall, then certainly installing a service hatch. We look forward to seeing where the questions and conversations take us each night, no subject matter out of bounds except for what the name means."

● **Go to:** awaywithmedia.com/tours/del-amitri for more information.



Museums
Monet at Tate Modern
Feb 25 to June 27, 2027

It's time to enjoy the genius of Monet

IN 2027, Tate Modern will present its first-ever exhibition focusing on the work of Claude Monet (1840-1926). Staged 100 years after the artist's death and featuring more than 60 paintings, Monet: Painting Time will be the UK's largest presentation of the artist's work in nearly a decade.

A Tate Modern spokesperson said: "Spanning 60 years of Monet's career, from the 1870s to the 1920s, the exhibition will feature highlights from his most famous series such as *Cathédrale de Rouen, effet de soleil, fin de journée 1892*, and rarely exhibited loans from private collections.

"Running from February 25 to June 27, the exhibition will trace Monet's creation of a new style of painting: capturing fleeting moments amid the accelerating pace of modern life.

"Returning to paint the same scenes and motifs throughout his career to observe the effects of time, light and changing seasons, the exhibition will culminate with works from his crowning achievement, the *Water Lilies* cycle."

Monet's career coincided

with a dramatic shift in society's perception of time, the spokesperson explained. The rise of railways in the 1860s brought about the need for standardised time zones, which drastically altered the rhythm of everyday life. Monet responded directly to this accelerating pace of modernity, his rapid brushstrokes capturing the fleeting effects of light and the atmosphere of the city.

He continually experimented with variations of the same subject to capture a specific, transient moment in time. Drawn to the variations of colour and texture produced by light at different times of day, he returned to motifs across seasons and years to depict the passage of time.

Tate Modern will offer a rare opportunity to view several of these celebrated 'series' together, including six works from Monet's *Grainstacks* series (1890-1) – paintings of harvested wheat near Giverny where he settled in 1883 – on loan from collections across the world.

Acquiring more land to cultivate a new garden and



● *Nymphéas (Water Lilies)* 1914-17, Musée Marmottan Monet, Paris, Annie Rouart bequest, 1993, Inv. 6085 © Musée Marmottan Monet / Studio Christian Baraja SLB

pond at his Giverny house from 1893 provided Monet with fresh subject matter for his paintings. His final monumental cycle of *Water Lily* paintings occupied the last three decades of his career. The exhibition will bring together

20 *Water Lily* works with rare loans from Japanese institutions such as *Water Lily Pond* 1907 and panoramic canvases such as *Water-Lilies* after 1916.

● **Go to:** tate.org.uk for further information.



Your Announcements

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

Seeking

I would like to catch up with a friend from our posting in North Front Gibraltar 1961-63 – his name is Bill Chapman and we worked together in the Instruments Workshop. We met briefly after re-pat but then lost touch. Bill is the taller chap on the right in the photo below. Please email Harry Burton: harryburton00@gmail.com



Harry Burton, left, is seeking Bill Chapman

SEEKING two mates from my days at St Athan in the early 70s, Wiggy McVey and Geordie Hepple, they were painters and finishers based at West Camp, St Athan. Please contact Charles Bell: chabell36@aol.com

SEEKING contact with former aircrew and ground crew of 80 Sqn who served prior to the September 1969 disbandment. I am looking to collect, document, and preserve first-hand accounts, photos and flight logs from this era. Please email: andrew.nash.722@mod.gov.uk

SEEKING Con Roscrow/Roscoe (not 100 per cent sure of his surname). Con was a Col. engine fitter when I was posted to 56 Sqn at RAF Waterbeach in April 1956 as a young airman. Over the next four years he mentored me until I became Junior Tech (engines) and was

posted to Australia. During this time we became good friends and I have looked for him for many years, problem being he would be in his early 90s now as I'm 88. Please contact: peterandell286@btinternet.com

FORTY years ago I interviewed a large number of veterans for a television series *The Road to D-Day*. Recognising the historic value of these interviews I archived them. Now that I am retiring, I am anxious that these historic contributions should not simply be thrown away. I am seeking to contact Dennis Sweeting DFC, 198 Sqn, Bunny Holden of 16 Sqn and Pat Porteous VC or their families/squadron historians. I am now nearly 93 and uniting these unique interviews with next of kin/units is an important part of my 'bucket list'. Given current privacy laws, making these contacts is a mammoth task; I hope someone can help. Please contact: Peter@pwtv.co.uk

Reunions

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

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

Associations

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

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

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

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

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

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

New memorial for vets

LASTING TRIBUTE:
Sculptor Andy DeComyn with the memorial



THE CHARITY Combat Stress marked a significant milestone in veterans' mental health history last month as work began on a new memorial at the Royal British Legion National Remembrance Gardens (formerly the National Memorial Arboretum) at Alrewas, Staffordshire, dedicated to veterans living with the psychological trauma of military service.

"The memorial, funded entirely by the generosity of two long-standing Combat Stress supporters who have also pledged legacies to the charity, will provide a permanent place of reflection, remembrance and hope for members of the Armed Forces community affected by mental health challenges," said a spokesperson.

The memorial, commissioned from sculptor Andy DeComyn, will be cast in bronze and mounted on a four-foot stone plinth. Close to the site's Remembrance Centre, it will reflect Combat Stress'

commitment to supporting veterans from across the British Army, Royal Navy, and RAF," the spokesperson added.

Due to be unveiled to the public in May 2027, it will recognise British Armed Forces personnel who live with conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety.

Robert Marsh, Director of Fundraising at Combat Stress, said: "This memorial will stand as a lasting tribute to the courage and resilience of veterans living with the invisible wounds of service. We hope it will serve as a powerful reminder that no veteran has to face these challenges alone and that support is always available."

Mr DeComyn said: "I feel enormously privileged to be part of this project. The sculpture depicts a veteran overwhelmed by the weight of their experiences, while also demonstrating that, with the right support, recovery is possible."

Free concert at the RAF's church, St Clement Danes

THE CENTRAL Church of the RAF, St Clement Danes in the Strand, London, is holding its annual Friends Concert on Thursday, November 26, 2026, starting at 6.30pm.

The concert will be given by the Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment* and the choir of St Clement Danes (all professional opera singers). The audience can look forward to excellent musicians performing exciting new and well-loved musical favourites, followed by wine, soft drinks and snacks after the concert, with the chance to meet the performers.

More than 130 people have

already requested tickets for this free concert, but tickets are still available.

Simon Denny, concert co-ordinator, said: "The concert combines outstanding musicianship with the chance to contribute to the upkeep of the wonderful Central Church of the RAF and meet up with old and new friends in the RAF family, it is a wonderful opening to the build up to Christmas."

You can email: concert@fscd.org.uk to request tickets.

*The Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment plays by permission of the Air Force Board of the Defence Council.

How to use our service

There is no charge for conventionally-worded birth, engagement, marriage, anniversary, death, in memoriam seeking and reunion notices. For commercial small ads contact Edwin Rodrigues on: 07482 571535. We cannot, under any circumstances, take announcements over the telephone. They can be sent by email to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or by post to: Announcements, RAF News, Room 68, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE.

Important Notice

The publishers of RAF News cannot accept responsibility for the quality, safe delivery or operation of any products advertised or mentioned in this publication.

Reasonable precautions are taken before advertisements are accepted but such acceptance does not imply any form of approval or recommendation. Advertisements (or other inserted material) are accepted subject to the approval of the publishers and their current terms and conditions. The publishers will accept an advertisement or other inserted material only on the condition that the advertiser warrants that such advertisement does not in any way contravene the provisions of the Trade Descriptions Act.

All copy is subject to the approval of the publishers, who reserve the right to refuse, amend, withdraw or otherwise deal with advertisements submitted to them at their absolute discretion and without explanation.

All advertisements must comply with the British Code of Advertising Practice. Mail order advertisers are required to state in advertisements their true surname or full company name, together with an address from which the business is managed.

Northolt hosts Ethnic Minorities Network event

AROUND 100 people came together at RAF Northolt last month for the two-day RAF Ethnic Minorities Network Conference, writes Flt Lt William Wambiru, RAF Ethnic Minorities Network Co-Deputy Chair.

Personnel from the RAF, Royal Navy and Army joined civil servants and industry partners Amentum and Ebeni for the event, with the theme Enhancing the Operational Mindset, to explore how people at every level can contribute to effective teams and operational success.

Delegate AS1 Susan Karanja said: "Hearing people openly share their experiences inspired me, as I could relate to many of the challenges they described and reflect on how these related to my own experiences within the workplace."

"Their stories gave me reassurance and new perspectives on how to navigate similar challenges."

"Meeting people in person also helped me build valuable connections with individuals I

can turn to for advice, support and mentorship in the future, beyond my immediate workplace."

Opening the conference, Network champion AVM Shaun Harris emphasised the connection between how people are led and the RAF's ability to fly, fight and win.

Former Network Chair Calvin Bailey MP, contributing by video, explored how visible representation can help people recognise opportunities they might otherwise consider beyond their reach.

On the second day, Lt Col Amos Simms explored mental resilience at every level: recognising personal limits, seeking support and returning to our values when direction becomes unclear.

Polar explorer Preet Chandi shared lessons on learning from setbacks and returning to demanding challenges.

Ugbana Oyet, Serjeant at Arms of the House of Commons, discussed calm, adaptable leadership, while Air Cdre Paul Hamilton highlighted the



importance of attentive listening and empathy.

Four personnel were recognised at the awards' dining-in night: Wg Cdr Joan Ochuodho from RAF Wittering received the Noor Inayat Khan Award for Inspirational Role Model, Mr Sahil Karra from RAF High

Wycombe received the Lilian Bader Award for Emerging Talent and Flt Lt Charles Ihe from RAF Benson was given the Mohinder Singh Pujji Award for Above and Beyond. Flt Lt Zhaira Kausar received the Ulric Cross Award for Outstanding Contribution.

Network Chair Wg Cdr

Princejit Ubhi said: "Named in honour of pioneering figures who helped shape our Service and our society, our awards recognise those who continue that legacy through leadership, service and a commitment to creating opportunities for others."





RAF News

The Forces Favourite Read

Hit your target market with **RAF News** - the official newspaper of the Royal Air Force since 1961.

Reaching an audience of more than 50,000 readers every fortnight, **RAF News** is the Forces' favourite newspaper delivering exclusive news, features and sports action from across UK Defence.

To discuss your advertising in **RAF News** please call or email:
T: +44 (0)7482 571535
E: edwin.rodriques@rafnews.co.uk



The official voice of the Royal Air Force



Prize Crossword
No. 420

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the 9 letters in yellow squares to find an RAF station.

Across

- 6. World War II plane from Yorkshire? (7)
- 7. Country where German says yes to god (5)
- 9. I enter into Fawkes' conspiracy with RAF operative (5)
- 10. Disturb old Penny upsetting purist (7)
- 12. See 3 Down
- 14. See 20 Down
- 18. See 20 Down
- 19. Southern harbour exhibit (5)
- 21. Some clich : Lenny meets beautiful woman (5)
- 22. Hunter's favourite RAF planes? (7)

Down

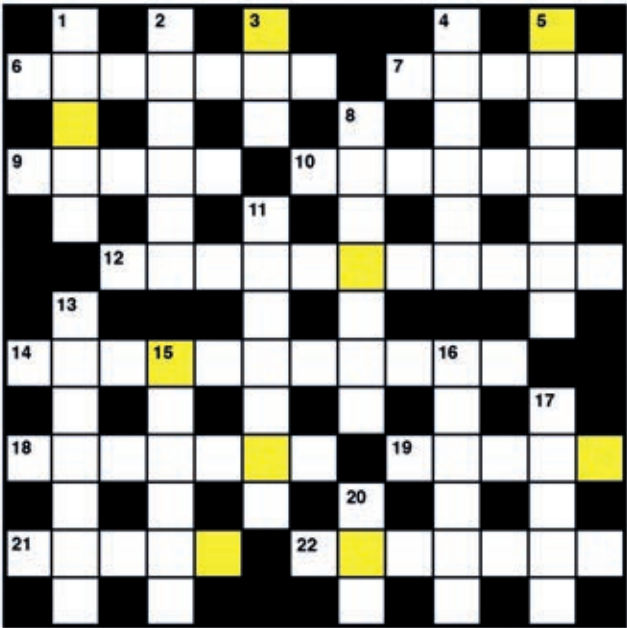
- 1. Scotsman embraces US soldier: wonderful (5)
- 2. Girl gives Yoko robe (6)
- 3. And 12 Across. Hot forum Lassie disturbed at station (3,11)
- 4. Rio had suffered cut (6)
- 5. Hostile action to contort misshapen hat (7)
- 8. Sack pilot beetle (7)
- 11. Country estate Simon Templar owned near Irish abbey, originally (7)
- 13. Directors and journalist went on plane (7)
- 15. Sweet favoured by Everton fans? (6)
- 16. Disclose Royal Engineers take drink (6)
- 17. Mark Brand (5)
- 20. And 18 Across, 14 Across. Flights take off when they say so (3,7,11)

Name:

Address:

RAF station Crossword No. 420

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent top aviation title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by November 13, 2026.



Prize Crossword No. 419 solution

Across – 7. Rimpac 8. Jackal 10. Chateau 11. Ruler 12. Ease 13. Screw 17. Diane 18. Jets 22. Torch 23. Ecuador 24. Drones 25. Vulcan
Down – 1. Cricket 2. Embassy 3. Paper 4. Harrier 5. Skill 6. Flare 9. Buccaneer 14. Fighter 15. Verdict 16. Tsarina 19. Study 20. Crook 21. Queue
RAF aircraft: Jupiter

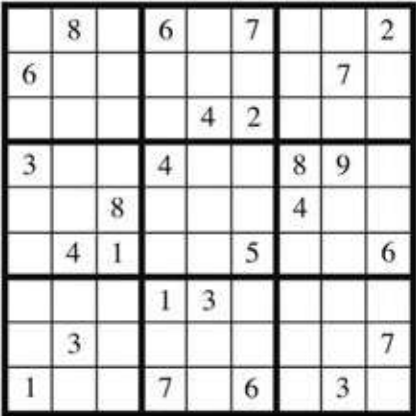
The winner of Crossword No. 418 is H Thomson, Birmingham.



Prize Su Doku
No. 430

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 November 13, 2026. The winner of Su Dok No. 428 is K McCarthy, London.



Solution to Su Doku No. 429

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



Film Review
Forgotten Island (PG)
Out now



TWO TEENAGED best friends are transported to an island of Filipino legend, where they risk forgetting each other forever in DreamWork's manic animation.

Jo (H.E.R) and Raissa (Liza Soberno) bonded as children in the 80s over the film Predator and stories about the island of Nakali and its rich tapestry of fantastical creatures. Although Jo is the more rebellious and impulsive of the two, Raissa has an anarchic streak of her own and so the two agree to be best friends forever, vowing to find this island.

By the time they discover a portal, however, they are teenagers, on the brink of growing apart: Jo stuck in a series of dead-end jobs, and bookish Raissa set to leave for Caltech university in the US.

Thrown into this crammed and colourful world, they are left with no memory of the previous 12 hours, just scars, stains and trophies, and so they will have to piece together the night of shenanigans to find the portal home.

They don't do this alone however,

Fantasy island

because during their blackout they apparently made a bunch of friends, including dog-boy Raww (Dave Franco). Unfortunately, they've also made a few enemies, including an adorable mushroom clan and a more terrifying beast known as the Manang (Lea Salonga).

There are a lot of ideas in Forgotten Island – perhaps too many. Or maybe it's the abundance of visual styles, or the way that it rapidly flits through them, fighting for your attention.

There are some funny ideas, such as a vain Merman (Kevin McCann) with a fragile ego and singing starfish nipples, but it can feel like a barrage at times, chopped up for an audience with a shorter attention span.

For all its creativity and imagination, Forgotten Island could do with remembering to take a breath every now and then.

Three out of five roundels
Review by Sam Cooney



Film Review
Whalefall (15)
In cinemas now

Swallowed whole

ON A mission to recover the body of his dad at sea, Jay (Austin Abrams) goes scuba-diving, but instead finds himself swallowed by an 80-foot sperm whale.

Despite its outlandish premise, this isn't Pinocchio. It is a survival thriller played relatively straight, as Jay desperately tries to save himself within the claustrophobic confines of the whale's insides.

Lit only by a similarly swallowed jellyfish, Jay has to figure out a way to escape before his oxygen tank runs out or he is digested. Abrams, who was under similar pressure in recent horror-comedy Resident Evil, is once again required to solve problems in extreme circumstances, all the while expressing his disbelief out loud. This tone seems more suitable with video game zombies than it does colossal sea creatures, but it does give us a break from his agonised panting.

We do get some relief from the cramped whale innards however through flashbacks, as we learn more about the relationship between Jay and his stoic father Mitt (Josh Brolin). A talented diver himself, Mitt is always expecting more from his college-bound son, deeming him to be unfocused and accusing him of having "soft lungs".

Their strained relationship gives Jay something more personal to contend with than simply staying alive. The flashbacks



Jay: The young diver's not having a whale of a time

do sometimes feel like convenient plot devices, equipping Jay not only with motivation but survival advice appropriate to his exact predicament at any given time.

For a film set in the ocean, Whalefall is mostly smothering and claustrophobic, feeling at times like a gigantic colonoscopy turned escape room. It's a high-concept film that commits to its bonkers premise, delivering a stressful splash-about that is almost as fun as it is silly.

Three out of five roundels
Review by Sam Cooney