

The Forces' favourite paper

Exploits of the Mach-busters

See page 17

Win!



80s RAF aircraft in the frame

See page 19

Win!



ROYAL AIR FORCE

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RAF News

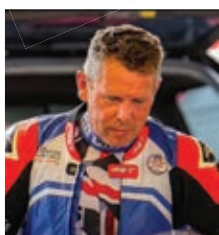


F1 know-how helps fuel Tempest



See pages 14-15

Motorsport 617 team dam fine



See page 23

Rugby Union Cocks of the North



See page 24

Swimming Women end IS drought



See page 27

Pitching in Down Under



Simon Mander

A ROYAL Australian Air Force F-18 Super Hornet displayed its firepower as Allies fired the starting gun Down Under on the annual Exercise Pitch Black.

RAF personnel and Voyager crews are taking part in high-stakes war-drills during the largest and most complex air exercises in the Indo-Pacific, bringing together 21 nations, more than 100 aircraft and around 2,500 personnel.

The RAAF jet performed a show-stopping display over Darwin's Mindil Beach watched by thousands, ahead of joining an international line-up of combat air power as crews hone their night-fighting skills.

See p5

BiteSize

“The water was so cold and the giant jelly fish were really scary,”

Sqn Ldr Juliette Lewis braves the unforgiving Northern Channel in charity swim

See page 13



“Sky was crazy, but this is where I want to be now,”

Pro boxer Cpl Brad Axe makes appearance on TV sports channel ahead of next fight

See page 24



“Coming back to the stage as a mum will be completely different,”

Strictly's Dianne Buswell dusts off her dancing shoes for new tour with Vito Coppola

See R'n'R page 4



NATO Protector deal



ROYAL AIR FORCE
RAF News

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AEROSPACE FIRM Inzpire has become the first UK defence company to instruct pilots and technicians on the RAF's Protector.

Instructors already deliver synthetic training for 54 Sqn at the Air Battlespace Training Centre.

Now the company has won a three-year deal with Nato to teach allies to operate the MQ-9B remotely piloted air system in its intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance roles.

54 Sqn's Wg Cdr Stu Phillips said: "Building on an established partnership, Inzpire brings a breadth of expertise that will enhance the delivery of training supporting frontline operations."

The team will train pilots, sensor operators and mission intelligence coordinators.

Inzpire's instructors are recruited from across Nato, the UK and the US.

The initial contract includes two Inzpire instructor crews with scope to expand to up to 37 crews.



WADDINGTON ROLE: Inzpire instructors will train crews from across the Nato alliance under UK deal

This Week In History



1940

Luftwaffe raids

THE LUFTWAFFE begin its Eagle Day attacks on RAF airfields, launching 1,500 sorties. Thirteen Spitfires are shot down for the loss of 47 German aircraft.

1951

Wellington hero

WELLINGTON NAVIGATOR Flt Lt Alan Quinton is awarded the George Cross for clipping his aircraft's only parachute to an ATC cadet passenger allowing him to escape when his aircraft went down following a mid-air collision.



1991

Granby begins

OPERATION GRANBY is launched with the initial deployment of 12 Tornado F3s to Dahrhan in Saudi Arabia, 12 Jaguars to Oman and two VC10 tankers and RAF Regt operated Rapier missile systems to Bahrain.

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

HAWK T2



Chiefs eye new Hawk

AEROSPACE GIANTS BAE, Boeing and Saab have signed an agreement to collaborate on a next-generation pilot trainer to replace the RAF's Hawk T1 and T2 aircraft, due to be retired from service by 2030.

Showcasing its new T-7 Red Hawk at Farnborough, BAE revealed the design will be powered by the same engine used by the F-18 and will feature open architecture with touchscreens to create air-to-air and surface-to-air threats from the cockpit.



STAR PERFORMERS: From left, Natalie Diamond, Mark Iliffe and Taylor Thomson

CARE HOME driver Mark Iliffe is teaming up with colleagues for a marathon bid to support the charity which cared for his RAF veteran dad during the last years of his life.

The 57-year-old Royal Star and Garter worker will be running with his son Joe and colleagues Natalie Diamond and Taylor Thomson in the Windsor Half Marathon next month.

The former recruitment specialist added: "Dad was a bit of a character and everybody knew him. When I came to see him, I was struck at how appropriate the care was.

"They knew what he enjoyed, what he loved and what made him happy.

"I owe the job to him, I feel he opened this door for me, and I feel grateful to him.

"I'd never worked in a care home before, but when I saw the job advert, I thought how good it would be to be part of the team that provided such great care for Dad."

Marham causes a buzz with Royal sweetener



Simon Mander

THE KING got a royal sweetener when he visited Marham as its Honorary Air Commodore.

His Majesty accepted a jar of 'Buzz Lightning' honey made by the Norfolk station's own bees and named in honour of its F-35B fleet.

During the visit, he was shown one of the stealth fighters and met personnel on air defence sorties who helped hunt Iranian drones heading for RAF Akrotiri, and those who took part in Nato drills aboard the UK Carrier Strike Group earlier this year.

During the visit, His Majesty formally opened one of RAF

Marham's new Junior Ranks Barrack Blocks.

He was accompanied throughout the visit by the Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk, Lady Dannatt, who met families in the garden of the air base's Sandringham Centre family hub.

Marham Station Commander Gp Capt Leonie Boyd said: "With the station celebrating its 110th anniversary, this visit felt particularly special, reflecting Marham's long and proud connection with the Royal Family throughout its history."

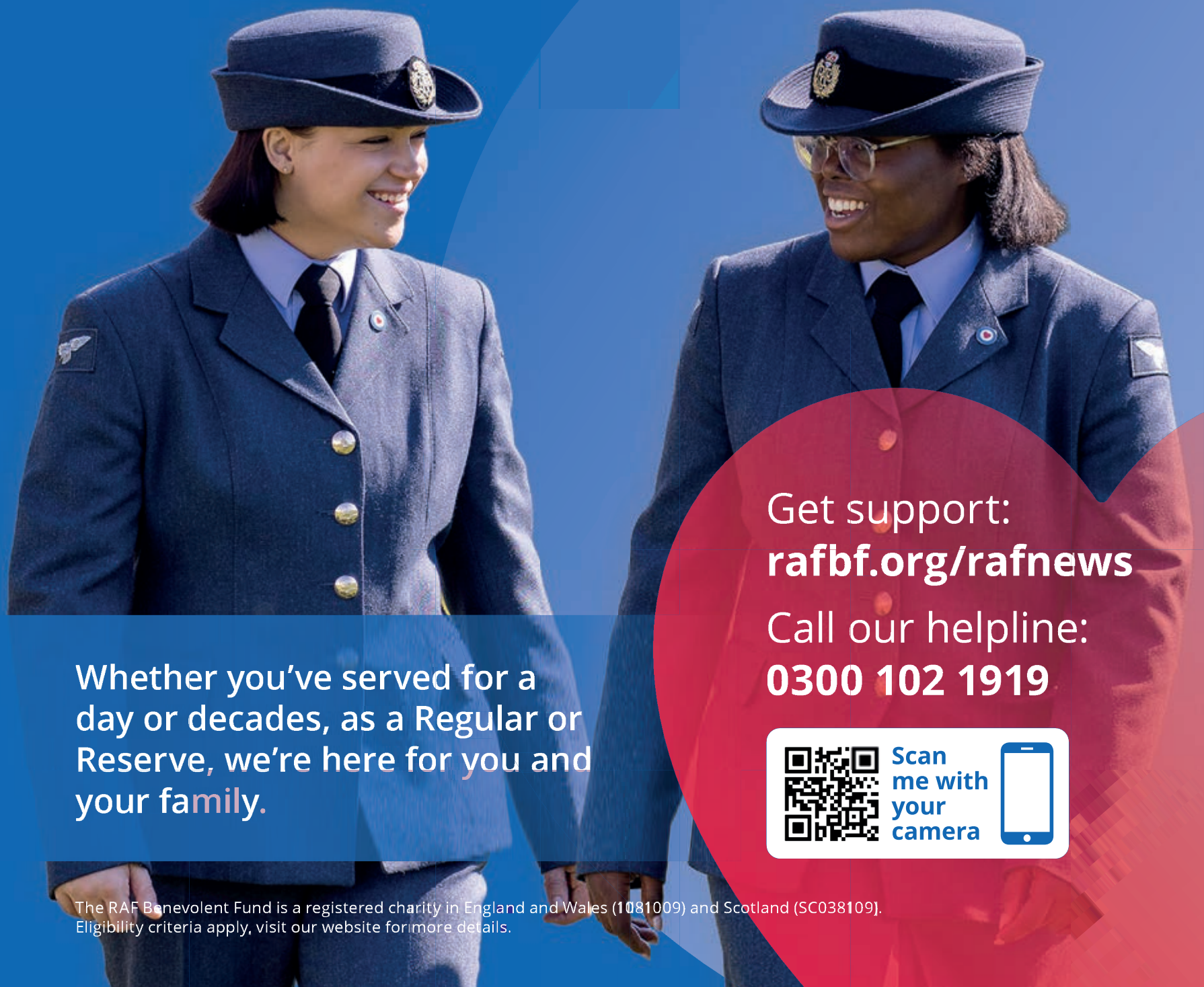


ROYAL VISIT: HM King Charles chats to personnel before being presented with a jar of Marham's exclusive 'Buzz Lightning' honey, produced by bees from the station's hives



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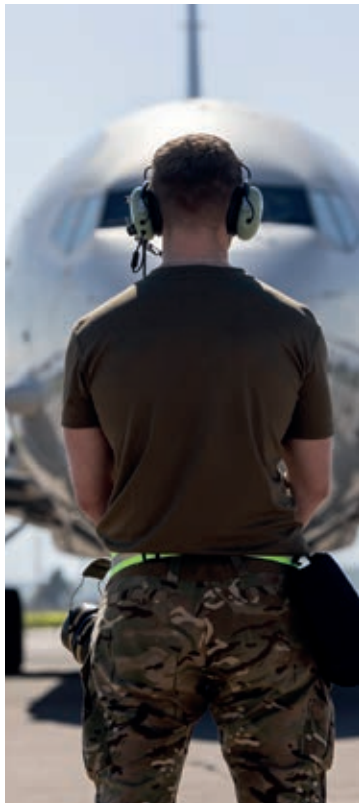


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Bulletin



Lossie P8 rescue call

A SHIP in distress has been rescued with the support of a Poseidon aircraft.

The Lossiemouth-based 201 Sqn sub-hunter was conducting routine training in the Irish Sea when it intercepted the SOS call from a stricken yacht taking on water.

Reaching the area five nautical miles from the coastline, the crew identified the vessel 'Ted' and directed other ships to the location.

Ships Angee and Ruby Dawn arrived to assist the crew while a Coastguard vessel launched from Port Patrick and people boarded the boat to carry out emergency repairs to the hull.

The 201 Sqn Poseidon, code named Guernsey 01, circled above until the vessel was towed to shore.

Back in Black

UK crews join the fight as Allies go head to head Down Under



PITCH IN: RAAF F-18 Super Hornet launches a simulated strike in high-stakes combat training. Inset below, US Marine V-22 Osprey in action. PHOTOS: CPL THOMAS BARNARD

Amy Casey
Australia

UK COMBAT specialists joined forces with air crews from 21 nations for the Royal Australian Air Force's largest international training drill.

The annual Exercise Pitch Black is designed to hone combat crews' night-fighting skills in large-scale, simulated missions.

UK roles include intelligence, planning, logistics, movements, medical support, catering, policing and refuelling the international line-up of more than 100 fighters, including Republic of Singapore Air Force F-16s operating from RAAF bases in Darwin, Tindal and Amberley.

One participant said: "I'm usually working on Typhoons and Poseidon aircraft. The Singaporeans have their own

procedures, the refuelling equipment is slightly different, and as it's a different aircraft, it's just nice to see something else on the pan."

Fast jets, tankers and support aircraft swept along the coastline during 90 minutes of flying.

Newcomer Indonesian Air Force 15 Sqn is taking part in Exercise Pitch Black for the first time, flying the T-50i Golden Eagle advanced trainer and light fighter.

Philippine Air Force's Lt Col Mario Mendoza, callsign 'Astro Boy', said: "This is where we get to improve our operational capabilities."

"What can we do with the assets that we have? And not just at a domestic level, but

at an international level. That's something that you cannot do if you just do it in your country."

Papua New Guinea Defence Force Air Transport Wing PAC 750 pilot Lieutenant Chen Haydim added:

"There's a lot in the exposure itself. We're learning from our bilateral partners, with the different assets they have and their capabilities. It's a good adventure and an eye-opener for us."

Its air transport crews also support search and rescue, medical evacuation and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, roles that can become vital when communities across the region are hit by natural disasters.



The Hunt is on



Staff Reporter

A PAIR of the RAF's most successful jets have taken to the skies again 75 years after their first flight.

The bombers flew over Cranwell in a commemorative pairs formation from Leeming to mark the anniversary.

More than 1,900 Hunters were built, serving with air arms around the world and remaining in frontline military service for decades.

The interceptor served with 21 air forces worldwide including India, Switzerland, Sweden and Singapore.

Runway success for Brize

PERSONNEL DEPLOYING around the world can get a bite to eat at a new café at Brize Norton.

The Oxfordshire station, which sends thousands of Servicemen and women out to theatre every year, has officially opened a new retail outlet at Runway 25 designed to meet the needs of a busy operational station.

Operating around the clock in the RAF's principal Air Mobility hub, it reflects the station's commitment to continually enhancing the services available to those who live and work on-site.



Brize Station Commander Gp Capt Louise Henton (pictured) said: "As a station that operates around the clock in support of Defence, it is essential we provide modern, accessible and high-quality catering facilities that meet the needs of our workforce."



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Welfare refit breaks cover

Charlotte Williams
Odiham

A DERELICT eyesore has been transformed into a new welfare centre after nearly a decade of neglect at Odiham.

The project to replace the ageing complex has been a development priority for station chiefs since 2017.

Now a major refurbishment has transformed the site into a well-equipped environment offering confidentiality for welfare appointments.

The centre was formally opened by Air Marshal Sir Baz

North. Station Commander Gp Capt Sarah Moorehead said: "The refurbishment has transformed the heart of our station into a vibrant hub.

"It is a place where the Odiham community can come together, find support, and strengthen the bonds that sustain us through both everyday life and times of challenge.

"This achievement is the result of years of vision, perseverance and dedication from a small number of committed individuals who never lost sight of what this facility could become."

Donations from The Nuffield Trust, RAF Association and

RAF Benevolent Fund financed the project and building work, which began last year.

It's hoped the welfare centre will become a focal point for families when the Chinook base sends crews on deployment overseas.

Odiham Development Officer Linzi Neal said: "To see this project reach completion is a huge achievement and a real win for our people.

"We hope it will become a vital hub for station life."



ODIHAM REVAMP: AM Sir Baz North opens the station's new welfare centre

CAP THAT:

St Clement Danes will install a time capsule detailing the work done during £2 million restoration



Time to celebrate Danes restoration

Tracey Allen

ST CLEMENT DANES trustees are set to mark the completion of its £2 million restoration later this year by installing a time capsule featuring images of the project to repair the RAF Church's famous steeple.

Trustee Delva Patman said: "We will include a selection of drawings of the work, a photo of the team and a short note explaining why the work had to be done. We also plan to include a copy of the St Clement Danes magazine."

The project is a partnership with specialist construction company Universal Stone and the Grade I-listed Sir Christopher Wren-designed church's trustees. A formal rededication will be held next April.

Delva added: "The Friends of St Clement Danes donated a substantial sum to restore and regild the weather vane, the sundial and the cartouche. We would like to restore the four clock faces but that costs thousands."

Trustees are hoping to raise a further £250,000 to restore the church's historic Harrison and Harrison organ, gifted by members of the USAF when the church was rebuilt in the 1950s after the building was almost destroyed by fire in 1941 during the Blitz.

Delva added: "Ideally, the restoration work will be finished in the autumn and then we'll hopefully start proceeding with the curtilage. Paving slabs were lifting because of tree roots underneath them."

Uncrewed Brontanax set for UK test debut



FUTURE FIGHTER: BAE's ground-breaking pilotless aircraft is designed to operate alongside Typhoon and F-35

Simon Mander

BRITAIN'S FIRST pilotless aircraft has been unveiled at the Farnborough International Airshow in a move which is expected to revolutionise the way the RAF flies and fights.

The prototype was designed and built by more than 500 BAE engineers working with more than 75 companies across the UK.

The first-of-its class aircraft – named Brontanax – is intended to provide electronic warfare and precision strike capabilities against airborne and ground targets.

Flying alongside frontline combat aircraft such as Typhoon, it will enhance operational effectiveness and aims to enter service before the end of the decade.

Chief of the Air Staff ACM Sir Harv Smyth said: "The RAF is determined to become Europe's first 6th Generation Air Force, driving innovation and accelerating the adoption of cutting-edge technology to stay ahead in an increasingly complex

and contested battlespace.

"Working alongside BAE Systems, we are taking a major step towards that ambition, with a prototype expected to fly next year.

"Backed by £300 million through the Defence Investment Plan, our StormFighter programme is transforming future capability, while the launch of Brontanax shows how sovereign defence industry is delivering at pace to support us in being agile, integrated and ready to fly, fight and win."

Similar in size to a Hawk, Brontanax is designed to be operated by a Typhoon pilot or mission commander from range, allowing crewed and uncrewed aircraft to operate as a team.

Developed with an open architecture and modular design, it can be adapted to stay ahead of evolving threats.

Defence Secretary Wes Streeting said: "The unveiling of Brontanax is a testament to the extraordinary talent and innovation across our sovereign

defence industry."

The announcement comes after Whitehall published its Defence Investment Plan, which confirmed a £300m commitment to the StormFighter collaborative combat aircraft programme.

Brontanax builds on more than 25 years of experience of uncrewed and autonomous systems.

BAE air sector group managing director Simon Barnes said: "Our Collaborative Combat Aircraft extend the reach of crewed aircraft while keeping pilots out of harm's way.

"This capability will strengthen the UK's sovereign defence ecosystem by creating opportunities for suppliers across the country."

Designed and delivered through BAE Systems' FalconWorks team, Brontanax has been funded through the company's self-funded research and development investment.

The aircraft is now being prepared for ground-based testing at Warton prior to flight testing within UK airspace.

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Jet-set gets stamp of approval



PIONEER: Frank Whittle



ROYAL MAIL chiefs are celebrating the work of jet engine pioneer Frank Whittle by issuing a set of stamps featuring the RAF boffin and some of the iconic warbirds his ground-breaking propulsion system gave birth to.

The collection marks 50 years since the Hawk entered service, 70 years since the Javelin and Vulcan, and 80 years since the Vampire took to the skies, while a further four stamps in a miniature sheet commemorate the 30th anniversary of Whittle's death.

Included are the UK's first jet-engined fighter the Meteor, Vulcan B1, which entered service in 1956; the Javelin, the world's first

twin-engine, delta-wing jet fighter launched in 1951; the Tornado, the RAF's first swing wing aircraft; the single-engined two-seat Hawk, still used by the Red Arrows; and the fifth-generation F-35 Lightning.

Royal Mail Director David Gold said: "From the pioneering Gloster Meteor, the first Allied jet fighter to enter service, to the Hawk, which has trained generations of military pilots, these aircraft represent decades of engineering excellence and technological achievement."

Flt Lt Whittle was just 21 years old when he came up with the concept of the gas turbine while serving at Cranwell, in 1921.

His engineering brilliance earned him a place at Cambridge University, where he continued his studies, and he went on to produce his first prototype engine in 1940.

From the RAF's first jet fighter, the Gloster Meteor F1 in 1944, to the supersonic fifth-generation F-35B, turbojet and turbofan engines have transformed the operational capability of military aircraft.

Frank Whittle's son, Ian, said: "My father used to say, 'Inventing it was easy. Making it work was the difficult bit.' His determination to turn a revolutionary idea into a practical reality transformed aviation and changed the world forever."



ROYAL HONOURS: CAS Sir Harv Smyth, left, joins Cpl Webb at Windsor Castle

Knight to remember

SERVICE HOT shot Cpl Nathan Webb joined Chief of the Air Staff ACM Harv Smyth at Windsor as the RAF marked a double royal honour.

Britain's top aviator was awarded a Knighthood by HM King Charles while Cpl Webb was presented with the King's Medal for Exceptional Marksmanship.



UPGRADE: Brize Station Commander Gp Capt Louise Henton officially hands over the runway to contractors

Brize team takes over

Staff Reporter

Brize Norton

BRIZE NORTON'S runway has been handed over to contractors to be replaced and upgraded.

Under the Defence Infrastructure Organisation scheme flying operations are to continue from alternative locations across the UK while work is conducted.

Station Commander Gp Capt Louise Henton said: "When completed, this project will provide a modern, resilient and future-ready airfield capable of supporting Defence operations for decades to come."

The programme forms part of a wider investment in RAF Brize Norton including the complete replacement of the 3km runway, refurbishment of taxiways, upgrades to airfield lighting systems and improvements to drainage.

Swiss roll into Leeming

Simon Mander

AEROBATIC ACES from the Swiss Air Force staged this year's only UK performance at Leeming.

The Yorkshire airbase is its second home in Britain, where it spends almost a month each year honing its night-flying skills.

Its Pilatus PC-7 trainers soared over Leeming's Families Day where stalls, rides and music were also staged for the thousands attending.

Unlike their counterparts in the Red Arrows, who are full-time members of the team, the Swiss combine spectacular display work with frontline roles on one of the country's two F-18 Squadrons, based in Payerne or Meiringen.

Team second-in-command

nicknamed Captain 'Hampi', said: "It's good to be here in nice weather for a change!"

"All military pilots in Switzerland start on the PC-7, so we have some experience of it before we join the team."

"The main differences are the proximity to each other and height above ground, which is a lot less than we are normally used to."

With most members serving on the team for at least three years, they develop close bonds.

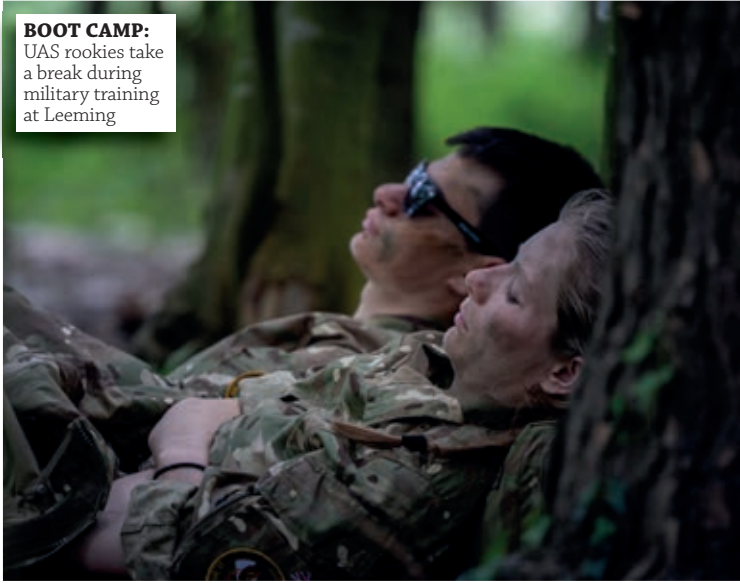
He said: "It's an enormous pleasure to be part of such a team because you really have to be confident in each other."

"It's cool seeing the pleasure in people's eyes when we get back to the ground. It's an honour."



News

BOOT CAMP:
UAS rookies take
a break during
military training
at Leeming



Students go wild

STUDENTS SWAPPED long lie-ins for a taste of life on the frontline at Leeming.

Yorkshire University Air Squadron members put their leadership skills to the test during military training challenges.

The annual course created by squadron chiefs is designed to teach a broad range of skills, from setting up camp to patrols and briefings.

A course supervisor said: "The UAS delivers an education that you can't get in the classroom, whether that's during camp or

on a training night. It takes a lot of work to put together but we find it very rewarding."

An Officer Cadet and Aerospace Engineering graduate said: "Training camp is always awesome. It's a bit intimidating at first but the squadron provides you with all the resources. It pushes you outside every comfort zone. I've been to Norway and Andorra, done Nordic skiing, and adventure training. It's a great mix of flying, travelling and studying pretty hard."

Hot to trot

Simon Mander

TYPHOONS AND F-35s hit the pit as ground crews tested their refuelling skills under combat conditions.

Personnel from Marham deployed to Coningsby to carry out hot-pitting drills, allowing F-35 Lightnings to refuel with engines running and return to battle with minimal turnaround time.

Coningsby station commander Gp Capt Andy Hampshire said: "Hot-pit refuelling is a demanding and highly-skilled procedure, and exercises like this are how we maintain and share that expertise."

"Coningsby is proud to support our colleagues from Marham and to keep the F-35B fleet at the peak of its operational capability."

Conducted in a realistic operational environment, the training allowed personnel to practise refuelling while maintaining maximum readiness.

One of the ground crew said: "Being able to train on a live aircraft in a controlled environment is invaluable."

"The team at Coningsby were incredibly professional and made sure we came away with the skills and confidence to carry out hot-pit



refuelling safely and effectively."

The exercise reflects the close working relationship between the Lincolnshire and Norfolk stations.

Gp Capt Hampshire added: "This is about ensuring that wherever our aircraft are

operating the ground crews supporting them have the skills, training and confidence to keep them flying."

"This exercise was a strong example of that commitment in action."



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Sgt Robert Small

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Unclaimed pensions go up as veterans are let down



THOUSANDS of former Service personnel are still missing out on AFPS benefits they have earned.

The latest AFPS Annual Report and Accounts 2025–26 shows that the number of unclaimed deferred pensions has risen again, reaching 17,018, up from 15,113 the previous year.

At the Forces Pension Society, we are extremely concerned to see this increase. Every unclaimed benefit represents a former member of the Armed Forces who has not received the pension they have earned through service.

The rising figure shows that MoD efforts to reduce the backlog are not yet having the desired impact. More consistent tracing, clearer communication, and targeted outreach would help ensure that former Service personnel receive the benefits they have earned.

And most of all, changing the system to notify all those who leave, of their right to claim their entitlement should be implemented immediately.

Through our Unclaimed Pensions campaigning we aim to continue raising awareness, signposting eligible Veterans to



unite them with their pension benefits.

Maj Gen Neil Marshall, CEO of the Forces Pension Society (pictured) said: “These latest figures for the year to March 2026 are most disappointing. Not only has there been no improvement in the numbers of unclaimed pensions, but the figures have gone in the wrong direction. “It’s high time that service

leavers should be notified of their entitlements. At present, they have to request payments. That should change immediately: the problem of tracing all those already losing out has to be tackled vigorously.

“If you think you, or someone you know, might not have claimed their pension on leaving, or if you’d like to help us with a donation toward our campaign to unite Veterans with their pensions, please visit: <https://forcespensionsociety.org/unclaimed-pensions>”

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

guidance to its growing membership base of more than 60,000 serving personnel and veterans. The Society champions pensions on behalf of the whole military community and, this year, celebrates its 80th anniversary. For more information about our work, visit: [forces pension society.org](https://forcespension-society.org)



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7.30pm Friday 2 October

Tickets and information www.rafconcerts.uk



CHANNEL VISION: Sqn Ldr Juliette Lewis hits the Northern Channel waters

Juliette takes charity plunge

SWIMMING SUPREMO Sqn Ldr Juliette Lewis joined a six-strong all-women relay team to conquer the Northern Channel – one of the UK's most demanding ocean challenges.

The Cranwell training chief braved chilling temperatures and 6ft jellyfish during stints in the choppy waters between the Mull of Galloway in Southern Scotland to the Northern Irish coast.

She took the plunge to raise funds for the Brian Appeal which supports dementia sufferers after her mother was diagnosed with the condition, preparing for the 22-mile challenge by taking ice baths.

She said: "This challenge definitely relied on mental resilience as the water was so cold and the jellyfish were so scary."

● To make a donation, go to: justgiving.com/page/juliette-lewis.



Darts duo on target

DARTS AMBASSADORS FS Ryan User and Sgt Steven Henderson hit the road to promote the sport in the Armed Forces.

The duo showcased their throwing skills and encouraged all comers to step up to the oche at the recent Cranwell families day during a series of fun challenges.

Bake that! Snack attack for Forces fundraisers

Simon Mander

CATERING CHIEFS are in a flap – over their new tasty charity fundraising drive to support the UK's frontline fighters.

They'll be selling a specially branded range of flapjacks in military stores, cafés and messes to raise cash for Armed Forces charity SSAFA.

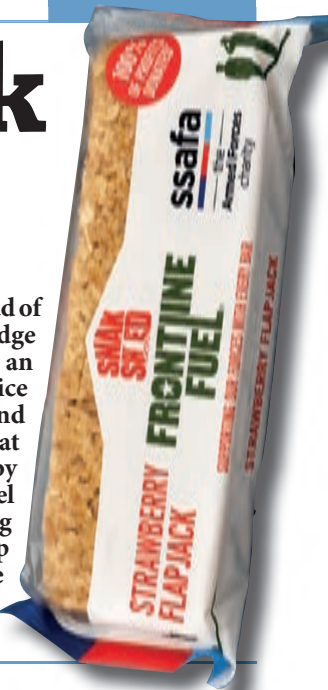
Developed with Snak Shed, the flapjacks are available in original, strawberry and white chocolate varieties and come in specially-designed packaging.

SSAFA spokeswoman Jenny King said: "The flapjacks are another amazing innovation and show just how valued our veterans, serving personnel and their families are by industries supporting the Armed Forces."

Samples were previewed at the Armed Forces Week event at Compass Group head office with the products being officially launched at the Defence Academy.

Business and charity bosses enjoyed a 'Big Brew Up' to encourage people to get together to share tea and a cake to support the charity.

Compass One head of retail Matt Windridge said: "Flapjacks are an ever-popular choice across our estate and it's brilliant that purchases made by our Service personnel will now be helping a charity group that supports the British military community."



Air Chiefs honour stars at Honington

Staff Reporter

Honington

TOP BRASS from across the RAF came together to honour some of its best at Honington.

Among them was the late Tony Flemming, who died earlier this year, after whom the spirit of 2 Group Award was named and presented to his wife Mandy.

AVM John Lyle said: "The greatest strength of 2 Group has always been its people."

"Bringing leaders together to discuss the path ahead, learn from one another and celebrate success is vitally important."

Also presented was The Charitable Endeavour Award, which went to Chf Tech Darren Budziszewski, based at RAF St Mawgan in Cornwall, for exceptional voluntary service to the RAF Air Cadets.

Alongside a demanding full-time role, Chf Tech Budziszewski (main picture) planned and delivered a summer camp, giving cadets an inspiring insight into RAF life.



Other winners included the Reservist of the Year Award, which went to 609 Sqn's Cpl Vinland for exceptional commitment to operational effectiveness.

The Innovation Award went to 2 Counter-UAS Wing's Shader Detachment for outstanding innovation and originality.

Benson's Cpl Deborah Reay

collected The People Award, while the Civil Servant of the Year Award was presented to Paul Jackson and Contributor of the Year was Mrs Thomas.



CPL DEBORAH REAY



PAUL JACKSON

Cyprus fire alert

Staff Reporter

Akrotiri

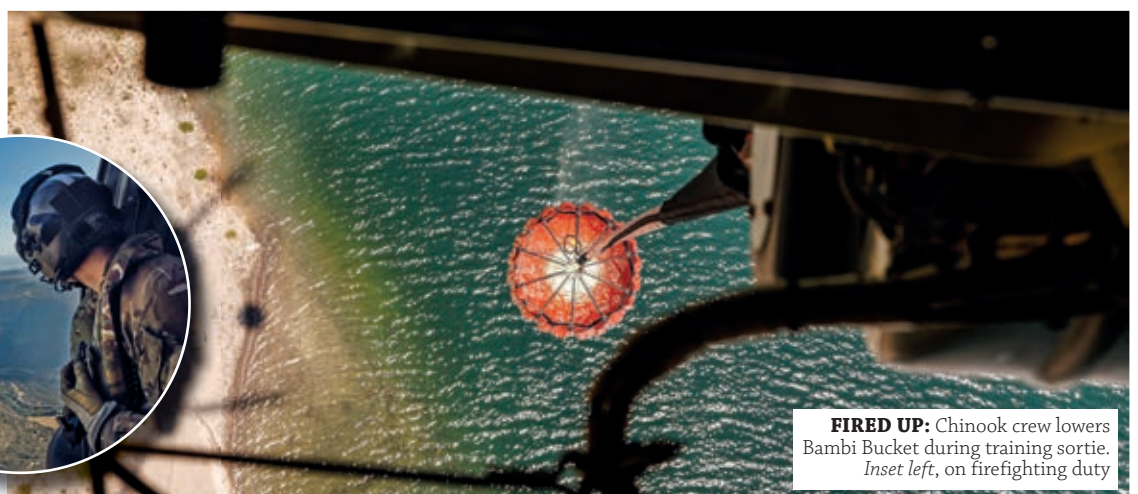
CHINOOK CREWS based at Akrotiri have launched firefighting training sorties as temperatures soar across Cyprus.

Island authorities have issued wildfire alerts as the island bakes in sweltering 45°C heat.

UK helicopter crews are on standby to support Cypriot forestry and fire services by

dousing forest fires spreading towards residential areas with sea water.

The twin rotor Air Force aircraft are equipped with giant 'Bambi Buckets' capable of carrying more than 1,500 gallons, which can be released from low altitude.



FIRED UP: Chinook crew lowers Bambi Bucket during training sortie. Inset left, on firefighting duty

Team Tempest

With tensions rising across Europe and the Pacific, the race is on to get the RAF's first sixth-generation fighter airborne

THE GOVERNMENT has pledged an extra £15 billion in defence funding to help secure Britain's Tempest Global Combat Air Programme.

The project to build the RAF's sixth-generation fighter is to receive £8 billion over the next four years, while the UK's drone programme will receive £5 billion in funding.

In the past, procurements like this would take decades to deliver. But tensions caused by the Ukraine war and a resurgent China mean the three partner nations behind Tempest want the aircraft deployed by 2035.

Chief of the Defence Staff, ACM Sir Rich Knighton, said: "The Strategic Defence Review will invest in defence over the coming years to deliver and build the integrated force the nation needs."

Defence chiefs have also pledged to raise spending on munitions and weapons to £11 billion, including long-range strike weapons, low-cost cruise missiles, and one-way UAVs.

£80 billion

The announcement will see an increase in defence funding to almost £80 billion a year by 2029, or 2.7 per cent of GDP. Central to all this is the collaboration between Britain, Italy and Japan on one of the most secret military projects in the world.

The Tempest programme will build a manned stealth jet of the future capable of managing swarms of drones.

For Britain and Italy, the need for speed is being driven by the threat from Vladimir Putin's Russia. In Japan, meanwhile, the concern is China's designs on Taiwan.

Thousands of engineers from Britain's BAE Systems, Italy's Leonardo and the Japan Aircraft Industrial Enhancement Co. have been seconded to the project's HQ in Reading to progress the programme.

It was feared Tempest would be scrapped or scaled down to make up shortfalls in the defence budget amid recent political uncertainty. But now the MOD has awarded a contract extension worth £708 million to BAE Systems to

progress the aircraft's development.

Under the deal BAE will deliver and integrate UK technology and develop capability, including software, digital networks, digital engineering and physical infrastructure, collaborating with Team

Tempest industry partners and the wider supply chain.

The jet will use a modular architecture with older technologies swapped for new ones as they emerge.

CDS: ACM Sir Rich Knighton

by Simon Mander

t steps up



BOLTED-ON SUCCESS: Tempest will utilise a modular architecture, based on F1 cars, to enable new technologies to be added easily and cost-effectively as they emerge



NEW TALENT: Tempest Team apprentices



6TH-GEN:
Tempest
is taking
shape

generation technologies.”

The funding extension continues the progress made by Team Tempest partners since 2018, with some 4,500 technicians researching, evaluating, and developing a range of future combat air capabilities.

But delivering a next-generation fighter jet by 2035 remains a major challenge. Under its latest contract, the company has been given until December 2027 to finish the design concept phase, after which it will have to put prototypes into production.

Meanwhile, thousands of engineers have been sent from bases in Preston, Turin, and Nagoya to join the collective effort to make the sixth-generation fighter a reality.

The latest programme’s key milestones include the final assembly of around half of the main aircraft structure for the new first crewed combat aircraft in 40 years.

11,500 parts

More than 11,500 parts have been designed to-date, around 90 per cent of the aircraft’s overall weight. Design teams hope to complete the first robotically assembled component in BAE’s ‘Factory of the Future’. Modifications to the Excalibur Flight Test Aircraft will also enable it to evaluate sensing and communications systems for Tempest.

Defence Director Future Combat Air Systems Richard Berthon said: “These achievements demonstrate the pace and scale of progress being delivered through the Team Tempest enterprise.

“From advanced digital manufacturing and flight testing to next-generation propulsion technologies, we are maturing the critical capabilities needed to deliver a world-leading Future Combat Air System for the UK.

“The expertise, skills and technologies being developed today are not only reducing risk for Tempest, they are strengthening our sovereign combat air capability and ensuring the UK remains at the forefront of air power innovation for decades to come.”



The approach – like that used by Formula 1 racing teams – it is hoped will deliver cutting-edge breakthroughs that can be used elsewhere, both in military and civilian applications.

BAE Future Combat Air Systems Managing Director Declan Holland said: “Our contract builds on the strong progress already achieved across the UK’s defence ecosystem, bringing together industry and academic partners to accelerate next-

“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.

Win!

Rocket Boys **Feature**

The race to smash the sound barrier and go far beyond

MACH attack

THIS IS a gripping story of pioneering aircraft achieving unprecedented speeds and reaching great altitudes.

In *Rocket Boys* (Grub Street, grubstreet.co.uk) David Baker describes the various rocket-powered experimental aircraft and the pilots who flew them in the three decades after 1945.

The emphasis is on research and development in the United States, but it touches on British aspects and highlights the rocket technology programme in Nazi Germany.

It was a dangerous game. This is an enduring theme of the book. Pioneers were not constrained by rules and regulations, but the risks were real and numerous accidents are recalled. The goals were ambitious too. In the post-war period, the evolution of rocket-powered, winged research aircraft was believed by its proponents to be the precursors of winged spaceflight.

At the outset, the author provides a brief history of the evolution of rockets, notably their highly effective use by the British military in the Napoleonic Wars.

The baton of rocket research was taken on by Germany in the interwar period. German rocket motor development led to the development of the little Heinkel He 176 in the late 1930s. The only surviving example was consigned to a Berlin museum and destroyed by bombing in 1943. The programme ultimately led to the Messerschmitt Me 163, the 'Komet', an aircraft characterised



SOUND BARRIER-BUSTER: 'Chuck' Yeager in orange-coloured X-1-1 named Glamorous Glennis after his wife

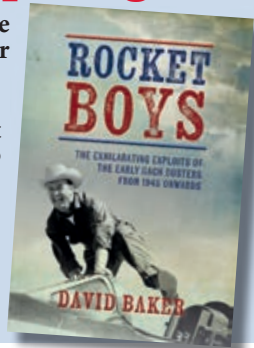
Copies of the book up for grabs

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

What was the Komet's top speed?

Email your answer, marked Rocket Boys competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE, to arrive by August 21.

Remember to include your full postal address with your entry.



by its sheer speed – it could reach 590mph.

The Third Reich embraced jet, rocket and ballistic missile programmes. Technical issues and disputes impaired rocket development. Willy Messerschmitt

viewed the Komet as a distraction from his Me 262 jet fighter.

The Komet's unpredictable flight characteristics made it challenging to handle, often with fatal consequences. Another danger was posed by the fuels

required. The toxic fluids were extremely volatile and needed to be handled with great care.

There were other downsides. These rocket interceptors were almost too fast. The target was barely in sight long enough to press home a meaningful attack.

The Komet first encountered American aircraft when defending the Leuna works at Merseburg on July 28, 1944, but too few would enter service to turn the tide for the Luftwaffe.

Ultimately fewer than 300 flew operationally for the Luftwaffe and they accounted for no more than nine Allied aircraft. Indeed, more pilots and Komets were lost in accidents. Nevertheless, all the Allies wanted to get their hands on the engineering which lay behind the Komet.

Another German wartime innovation was the manned missile the Natter. This piloted rocket would fire a cluster of smaller rockets to down the bombers, before the pilot and the motor were parachuted separately back to earth.

Small, cheap and simple, the Natter was tested successfully but the first manned flight proved to be fatal for the test pilot after the motor shut down. The course of the war doomed the Natter although the Americans were very interested in developments and seized two complete Natters.

The one Briton to fly the aircraft at the war's end was the Royal Navy's vastly experienced test pilot Captain Eric 'Winkle' Brown. He flew it in Germany and later back in Britain, where 25

Komets retrieved from Germany were brought. However, Britain's post-war economic difficulties led to the programme to develop a supersonic aircraft being cancelled. The Americans took the lead.

The author discusses the development of rocket-powered aircraft in the US during the war. Even then its backers had one eye on its potential application for space flight.

A range of major bodies were involved in American research including the United States Army Air Force (USAAF), the US Navy and the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA).

Rival research programmes launched a series of test flights and the exploits of heralded and greatly-skilled test pilots such as 'Chuck' Yeager and Scott Crossfield are recounted. In their cramped cockpits they tried to exercise some control over thrust, reaching ever faster speeds at higher altitudes.

The challenge of flying through the sound barrier was surmounted in 1947 by Yeager in the iconic X-1 aircraft. As the author highlights, aircraft engineering had evolved from the first powered flight at little more than running pace to rocket flight through the sound barrier in 44 years.

The book is well illustrated throughout. However, while the author includes acknowledgements and an index, frustratingly there is no bibliography or any indication of the sources he consulted.

Review by Alastair Noble



NASA EFFORT: X-15, the ultimate rocket ship, certainly looked the part



Handling Me 163 propellants



Moving an Me 163 prior to flight



Test pilot and astronaut Neil Armstrong in an X15



'A terrific storyteller'
BOOKLIST

'A pulse-pounding adventure'
PUBLISHERS WEEKLY



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

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RAF in Camera **Feature**



GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN: Avro Vulcan B.2 XM657 of 44 Sqn, Wales, March 1980 (above), Percival Pembroke C.1, WV701 of 60 Sqn, October 1982 (top right) and Harrier test rig for trials at the MOD Proof and Experimental Establishment at Shoeburyness (right)



80s RAF in focus

DURING THE 1980s, only a few aircraft types were completely withdrawn from the RAF, including the Whirlwind HAR.10 helicopter, the Devon C.1, the Pembroke C.1 and some of the earlier Jet Provost T.3, T.4 and T.5 aircraft. However, in that decade, the Service said farewell to a pair of military icons – the Avro Vulcan in 1984, and the English Electric Lightning in 1988.

Aircraft arriving into RAF service included the Tornado GR.1 in the strike/attack role, developed as the Multi-role Combat Aircraft (MRCA) by a multi-national organisation from Italy, Germany and the UK. It was soon followed by the Tornado F.2 and F.3 interceptor variants in the Air Defence role. Other new aircraft and helicopters to enter service in the 1980s included the Chinook HC.1, the Harrier GR.5, the British Aerospace BAe 146 CC.1 and the Tucano T.1.

In *RAF in Camera 1980-1984* (pen-and-sword.co.uk) aviation photographer Keith Wilson (inset right) provides a unique photographic portrait of the Royal Air Force during one of the most significant decades in

Copies of the book up for grabs



FOR YOUR chance to win a copy of this top title, answer this question correctly:

Which two military icons did the RAF say farewell to in the 1980s?

Email your answer, marked **RAF in Camera 1980-1984 book competition**, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: **RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE**, to arrive by August 21. Please include your full postal address with your answer.

aviation history. This impressive book, a must for aviation enthusiasts, covers the RAF's developments and service as the Cold War was drawing to a close.

From the RAF perspective, the period covered by this title was dominated by the events of 1982 and the Argentine invasion of the Falklands. Wilson details the Air Force's response to the Argentine attack and the part it played in the creation of the Task Force. He

explores the RAF aircraft and crews in action over and around the Falkland Islands – including the famous Black Buck Vulcan sorties – describes the creation of the RAF's air bridge to the South Atlantic and examines many of the various aircraft operated by the RAF in the 1980s.

Wilson said: "While the Task Force [sent by Margaret Thatcher to recapture the Falkland Islands] was



primarily constituted of Royal Navy equipment and British Army and Navy personnel, the RAF's contribution to the conflict was significant, including Harrier GR.3 aircraft from 1 Sqn, RAF Wittering, operating alongside Royal Navy Sea Harrier FRS.1 aircraft and a Sea King helicopter on HMS Hermes."

He explained: "Reflecting the needs of the economic climate of the decade, a number of aircraft types were able to remain in service for longer than may have been the norm back in the 1950s and 1960s. Thankfully, the build quality of aircraft had improved, as well as the design life (fatigue life) of many types having been extended. Consequently, fewer aircraft types bade farewell to their RAF service during the early 1980s than had done so in previous decades."

"The first to go was the Westland Whirlwind HAR.10, a helicopter type that had become particularly popular in its all-over yellow rescue colours, providing the backbone of the RAF's search and rescue capability since entering service back in the early 1960s."

"The last was withdrawn from

UK service with 22 Sqn at RAF Chivenor on November 30, 1981. However, the Whirlwind HAR.10 continued in service with 84 Sqn at RAF Akrotiri until withdrawn in March 1982, when replaced by Wessex HCs helicopters."

He added: "Having provided a significant part of the UK's nuclear deterrent for many years, and having served with distinction during the Falklands Conflict, it was time for the Avro Vulcan to leave RAF service. The last Vulcan B.2 aircraft were withdrawn from use with 44 Sqn on December 31, 1982. The following year, the last of the Maritime Reconnaissance Vulcan B.2 (MRR) left service with 27 Sqn."

Wilson said: "New aircraft joining the RAF during the decade included a good mix of brand-new types that had undergone a significant development programme, through some existing types that were upgraded or improved, to the acquisition of second-hand aircraft – both from military services elsewhere, or converted after acquisition from their previous civilian operators. It was something of an odd era of 'make do and mend!'"



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Veteran's journal

Competition

Create your own Service diary

A FORMER Serviceman has just published a book specially for veterans – with a difference.

Tony Carlyon, who served with the Army in the 1990s, has devised *My Service, My Story: A British Veteran's Guided Memory Journal*.

He explained: "It's a structured keepsake journal for British veterans and serving personnel of all three Services. It guides them through documenting their Service story – from life before the Forces through to coming home – with prompts for personal letters, medal citations, a Service timeline and more. Veterans can record their full Service story in their own words."

"It guides veterans through 12 sections – from the decision to join up, through training, postings and operations, to leaving Service and the road back to civilian life – with space for photographs, maps and mementos, letters to loved ones and reflections on the people they served with."

Tony added: "Many veterans carry stories they've never fully shared. This journal gives them a gentle, organised way to do so – and creates something their families can treasure for generations."

The journal has more than 80 thoughtful prompts across 13 sections, and takes vets through every chapter of their Service. Section headings include: Before the Forces – the life that led you to the gates; Signing Up – basic training and the moment it became real; Life in the Forces – the routines, the humour, the things you will never forget; Where You Served – postings, places, and what the world looked like from there; In the Field – operations, tours, and the moments that tested everything; The People You

Handy veteran's guide can help keep cherished memories alive

Served With – comrades and bonds that last a lifetime; What the Forces Made of You – skills, values, and the things that never left you and Looking Back – reflections on a life in service.

Tony said the book is written with deep respect for Britain's Armed Forces, and would make a meaningful gift for any occasion where a veteran's story deserves to be honoured.

He added: "I served with the Royal Logistic Corps (Maritime), from 1994 to 1999. During that time my service included maritime security, anti-piracy operations, counter-terrorism, amphibious operations alongside the Royal Marines, and search and rescue."

"I created *My Service, My Story* because

there was nothing out there giving veterans a structured way to record their service – not just dates and deployments, but the stories and experiences behind them. It's something to pass down to the family as a proper keepsake."

The book, produced in both paperback (£12.99) and hardcover (£19.99), is available to order from Amazon.

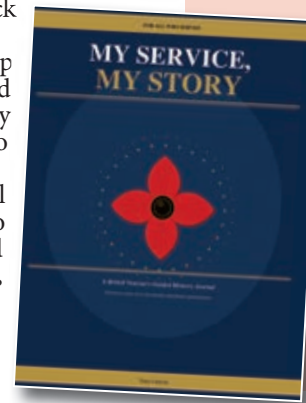
Author Tony, who specialises in creating practical books built around real needs, has previously produced a wide range of titles including large-print puzzle books for seniors, activity books for children, guided journals, a personal finance tracker, a keepsake baby journal and *While You Were Away*, a companion journal to *My Service, My Story*, for military families left at home.

Win yourself a copy

YOU COULD win a copy of *My Service, My Story* in hardback. For your chance to own it, answer this question correctly:

Who did author Tony Carlyon serve with during the 1990s?

Email your answer, marked Veterans 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 August 21. Please include your full postal address with your entry.



Feature

Sgt was made up with role in classic *Dam Busters* film

AN EXHIBITION celebrating 100 years of Elstree Studios and featuring the role of RAF Signaller Bill French in the

classic film *The Dam Busters* has just opened.

Ribbon of Dreams is now on at Elstree & Borehamwood



SUPPORTING ROLE: Bill French (left) with Richard Todd, who played Wg Cdr Guy Gibson

Museum and runs until January 31, 2027. Admission is free.

The 1955 film, considered one of the greatest British war movies ever made, starred Richard Todd as Wg Cdr Guy Gibson, Michael Redgrave as Barnes Wallis and Robert Shaw as Flt Sgt J Pulford.

Simon Gee, a volunteer and trustee of the museum, said: "The flight sequences in *The Dam Busters* were created with significant help from the RAF, loaning Lancasters and serving personnel. One of them was Sgt Bill French and we have his flight logs, photos and stories to tell us more."

A text panel in the exhibition uses Bill's own words:

"I was in attendance and took part in all the necessary activities, from first flight on 8 April 1954 until July 1954 for the Derwent filming. Our Lancaster was P for 'Popsie' and was skippered by F/O Lambert. First week was practice followed by low flying and formation practice."

"Authenticity and attention to detail was our main aim. I was involved in all the scenes



WHAT, NO MAKE-UP ARTIST: Bill Kerr does his best to get Bill French screen-ready

during the flying and filming in Scampton, Syerston, Hemswell, Kirton Lindsey, etc. including the searchlight episode.

"In the film Flt/Lt Mick Martin was played by Bill Kerr and there were three of us from 97 Sqn who were picked for the walk-on parts of the signaller, the mid upper gunner and the rear gunner. They were Sgt Baines, Sgt Wilson and myself to create the complete crew of P for Popsie."

"We were all made up to look tired after the flight, and the photo shows Bill Kerr putting make up on my face whilst Chunky Baines and Tug Wilson looked on."

Simon added: "This is just one

small account of the making of the film. For a more detailed look see *Filming The Dam Busters* by Jonathan Falconer. The book was launched on Veterans Day in August 2005 at LAHC East Kirby. Bill French was there along with Richard Todd and others from the filming."

The exhibition, which also features hit films made at Elstree Studios including *Moby Dick*, *Ice Cold In Alex*, *The Railway Children*, *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, was officially opened by Noel Cronin, the founder of Talking Pictures TV.

● Go to: elstree-museum.org.uk for more information.

Free Elstree Museum exhibition



Back in the big league

Lotus Emira in same class as iconic Esprit



STUNNING GOOD LOOKS:
And the car's not bad either!

THE NEW Lotus Emira is a thing of beauty and a thoroughbred supercar. Underneath, it uses a bonded aluminium chassis to give it feel and agility through the bends. It has inherited its wheelbase from the Evora but has become slightly larger in every other dimension. It is the authentic performance model that Lotus needs to put it back in the supercar game.

Those of us who love the old Esprit (yes, I've had a few over the years and I still own one today) have been waiting for the Emira to land for a long time. It doesn't disappoint.

Exterior

There are those who will argue with me about describing the Emira as a 'supercar', rather than a 'sports car', but they're wrong and I'm right. Here's why...

The Emira has exotic styling, with supercar rear haunches and dramatic air intakes. It's a car that easily looks like it's worth six figures. Added to that, it's a race-derived two-seater that's supremely agile, fast and has a mid-mount engine that's visible through the rear screen.

A range of stunning colours is available and the Emira looks striking in all of them. In 'vivid red', you would be forgiven for mistaking it for a Ferrari.

Interior

The Emira is a no-compromise two-seater and the cabin is compact by design. That said, getting in and out with dignity (always an art with Lotus) is possible thanks to lower, narrower sills and wider opening doors.

There's also a lot more space inside than you might expect. Behind the seats there's a 211-litre luggage shelf to complement the decent-sized boot behind the engine bay and

Pros

- Stunning supercar design
- World-class handling
- Massive sense of connection to the road
- Impressive interior quality

Cons

- Steering wheel controls too easy to operate accidentally
- Luggage can get toasty in the rear boot
- Not the fastest supercar
- Pricier than originally touted

there are a few cubby holes dotted around. Twin cupholders, carpeted door bins and a proper glovebox add to the package.

The materials used feel more upmarket than anything Lotus has produced since the Esprit and the interior feels like a supercar should. The centre console houses the engine start button, guarded by a race-style safety cover. You flick up the cover to press the button and fire up the tuneful V6. It feels very dramatic.

The instrument binnacle features a sharp 12-inch display that presents a wealth of driver information, while a 10.25-inch touchscreen in the middle of the dash operates the infotainment system. It's fast and logical, with sharp graphics.

The seating position is brilliantly engineered and you sit directly in front of the steering wheel. The seats don't go quite low enough to hit the sweet-spot, in my book, but it's otherwise absolutely perfect.

The view through the windscreen is also amazing, with the tops of the wheel arches

Lotus Emira

Verdict

The Emira is a stunning, organic supercar. It's the last chance to buy an old-school petrol V6 that focuses on going fast rather than saving the planet. It impresses with its fine handling, luxurious interior and plush ride. It's an absolute riot to drive and it oozes authenticity. It heralds the return of Lotus to the big league, with a supercar that stirs the imagination.

framed perfectly. Not only does it make placing the nose of the car easy, it creates a real sense of dramatic beauty.

On the road

For decades, the Esprit was the pinnacle of Lotus engineering and, in many ways, it's impossible to directly compare a new model to a supercar from that era, because so much has changed, not least safety regulations, but the Emira is the closest thing that Lotus could have produced. It's a purely organic, petrol-powered supercar that, in track mode, shuts off all the electrics to enable it to behave very much like the Esprit.

It offers more feedback and connection to the road than any other car in its class and the supercharged V6 whines away behind you like a jet. Some of the grittier feedback/noise has been filtered out to make the Emira feel like a more refined racing machine, but not enough to dilute the experience.

Lotus is very good at setting its cars up to be specifically tuned for either road or

track and our test car was very much geared for road use. Potholes are well damped (in supercar terms) and you won't find yourself scraping the underside on every speed hump that you encounter.

The steering remains lightning fast and impeccably precise but, in anything other than 'track' mode, it'll understeer before the back loses grip. It's reassuringly predictable for everyday use. You can feel the road set-up on the suspension too, with a small amount of dive on heavy braking, from the longer-travel suspension. With this configuration, it's a car that tours effortlessly, breathing in winding mountain roads and gripping them firmly through the bends.

We pause to take a few shots in the Shropshire hills, then fire up the 3.5 litre V6. We shut off the 'nanny mode' electronics and the throaty roar echoes around the hillside. It is pure automotive melody. Once underway, the V6 produces a harmonious tone, rising to a symphony of noise as the whine from the supercharger works its magic. The 3.5-litre engine isn't a screamer though, less raucous than the V6 of the final Evora.

Power round the winding roads, flanked by stunning scenery and sheer drops, that will certainly kill you if you get it wrong, and you realise just how exciting the Emira feels. It's incredibly adept at putting the power down, thanks to its impressively wide rear tyres and feels more alive than most £200k supercars.

So, let's take a quick look at the stats. The V6 develops 310lb ft of torque and 400bhp. 0-60mph is achieved in 4.2 seconds, topping out at 180mph. Now, I said that you can't compare the Emira directly with the Esprit, but it is striking that the final V8 version of the Esprit delivered almost exactly the same figures. The Emira feels like a natural and fitting evolution.

MOTORSPORT

The bomb squad

LONG-RANGE 'BOMBERS' from the RAF were the first single-bike team home in the UK's toughest motorcycle endurance challenge – the 12-hour No Limits Racing event in Anglesey.

The Dambusters 617 team of Sgt Dean Turner, AS1 Joe Woodward, AS1 Piotr Gawaluch and WO Al Sharp joined a grid of 29 teams to race on their Kawasaki ZX636

Sharp told *RAF News*: "Unlike most of the other teams on the grid, we wanted to not only be physically challenged but engineeringly challenged, so we opted on racing a single bike for the entirety."

"As a motorcycle racer and engineer of many years, I knew this assault would highlight the skills and fitness of the riders – who would each have 45-minute

stints on the bike – and test the engineering abilities of the support crew to keep the motorbike on track for the 12 hours."

Endurance racing has been a significant part of the No Limits Racing series for a number of seasons, and the RAF have secured several excellent results over the years, with the team hoping for more of the same this time around.

Having acquired the ZX636 last year, after RAFMSA secured funds from the RAF Recruitment and Selection team, the ride was partially race prepared for the 12 hours.

The test morning offered the riders all a chance to get tuned into the bike, while qualification in very hot conditions went well for the team, qualifying 19th on the grid.

Race day began with a Le



ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL: 617 team, inset, took turns riding ZX636, above left, almost 1,000 miles

PHOTOS: CAMIPIX

Mans-style start and Sharp was the first man aboard, his steady start hampered when a rear wheel change cost the team three laps and further mechanical issues also slowed down progress.

Once on the go again, the team refocused on beating the other

single-bike outfits, including the Army.

The pit team were busy changing the front wheel twice, the rear five times, two sets of brake pads and completing 14 refuels – often under the gaze of the No Limits Racing TV crew.

As the chequered flag came out, DART motorsport won the overall event, with 617 the first single-bike team home, finishing 23rd overall and 8th in class, having completed 386 laps, equating to just under 1,000 miles.

CYCLING

Riders clock on



THE INTER-SERVICE Time Trial Championships saw riders from the RAF just pipped to the post by the Army to record a battling series of runner-up finishes.

Battling the Tri-Service field on the fast F8/25A dual carriageway course near Huntingdon, the significantly weakened RAF team still managed to produce some real fireworks.

There were two first places in the Individual Road Bike events, with the top two spots in the men's event going the way of the RAF through FS Andy Taylor 56:53 and AS1 Kieran Kirk 1:00:02.

Every RAF rider dug deep, producing determined rides that kept the competition alive throughout the day.

Cpl Adam Baker powered to second place in the Open Time Trial with an impressive 51:37.

The Army's depth ultimately proved decisive, securing both the Individual and Team Open championships, with the RAF finishing as Inter-Service runners-up in both the Open and Women's team competitions, ahead of the Royal Navy.

● Follow RAF Road Cycling on Instagram @rafcycling.

ICE HOCKEY

Thank Evans for the Learn to Play camps

Ryan develops new talent

SERVICE ICE hockey held the second of its three annual Learn To Play skills coaching camps for the year at Telford Ice Rink.

The camps, created by the RAF Ice Hockey Association (RAFIHA), see personnel from all three Services coached with on-ice activities at Telford Ice Rink, with off-ice training at RAF Cosford held by Cpl Ryan Evans.

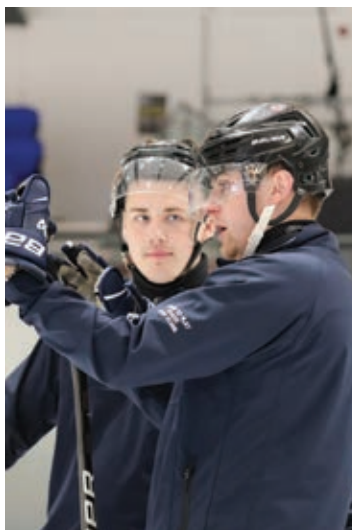
The programme launched in 2016, with this month's camp seeing 37 RAF, five Army and two Royal Navy personnel take part.

Designed for newcomers to the sport, head coach Evans provides bespoke training to develop skating and stick skills.

He said: "Having had the privilege of serving as Head Coach for the past few years, it has been incredibly rewarding to watch the programme go from strength to strength."

"Nearly half of the current RAFIHA members discovered the sport through an LTP camp, demonstrating how vital this initiative has become in securing the future of RAF Ice Hockey."

Cpl Vicky Parry said: "LTP is the foundation for the growth of the RAFIHA. Every year it sees new players progress from



HEAD COACH: Cpl Ryan Evans, right

their first camp to being fully fledged members of regional and representative teams.

"I first attended an LTP in December 2022 having never played ice hockey before, going on to play in the inaugural RAF Pumas Inter-Service game in 2024 and now holding 'the treble' as of June 26. Without RAFIHA LTP I would never have tried this sport."

● Follow RAF Ice Hockey on Instagram @raficehockey.



STICK SKILLS: Learning the basics

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Sport

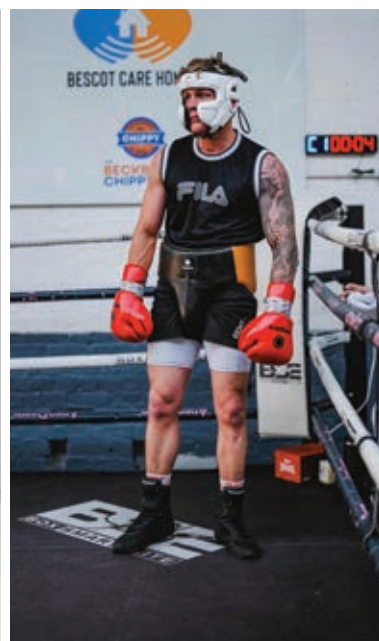
BOXING

Axe reaches for the stars

Sky broadcast gives boost to fire instructor



RISING STAR: Axe at studios, and in the gym, right



Daniel Abrahams

THE SKY really is the limit for Cpl Brad Axe as the Service's only professional boxer prepares to fight Scot Sam Hickey in Ireland.

The fight, which will be shown live on Sky Sport's new Zuffa boxing channel on August 8, will see the aviator take on the former Commonwealth Games gold medallist at the 3Arena, Dublin.

Axe told *RAF News*: "This is a massive opportunity and I have to grab it with both hands.

"We are both looking for a step up, but this is a bigger step up for me. He was a Commonwealth gold medallist, so is a very good opponent. I have never said no to

a challenge; this is the universe speaking to me, my wife told me, so I have to go for it."

The eight-round bout, the third-last of an eight-fight card, will be a first for Hickey, with Axe already having this distance under his ever-improving belt.

The card will culminate in the Middleweight World title 12-round fight between Aaron McKenna and Etinosa Oliha.

In the build up to the fight Axe, his wife Katelan and young son Otis were interviewed by Sky Sports at their studios in London. Axe said: "Sky was crazy, but this is where I want to be. These nerves are what it is about, and the things that come with it. To be taken down to Sky Sports

with my wife and baby, well that was something else and another achievement. A win here is life-changing and that is becoming clearer day by day."

The RAF fire training instructor added: "I am deep into camp now, Hickey is taller than me, so we've been planning with that side of things. It makes it very interesting to work like this and amend things for this sort of fight. I am fully focused on training and the sparring has been great.

"Once again, I will have about 30 of the Axe Gang coming. One friend is spending a good sum of his hard-earned money to be there, that makes me prouder and want to go that bit harder."

RUGBY UNION



LATE TRY: AS1(T) Keiron Prescott was one of four aviators in the UKAF squad

UKAF and Prescott are cocks of North at Donny

RAF PERSONNEL played a key role as UKAF's men's rugby XV secured an impressive 42-26 victory over a North of England Select XV at Castle Park, Doncaster.

The annual fixture that supports the Military vs Cancer charity featured four aviators, with AS1(T) Keiron Prescott starting on the wing and running in a late try, while Cpl James Roberts (hooker), Fg Off Keiron Forbes (flanker) and Cpl Sam Boxhall (scrum-half) all made valuable contributions from the bench.

The fixture marks the beginning of UKAF's preparations for the International Defence Rugby Competition (IDRC) in Australia in August 2027, giving coaches the opportunity for the squad to begin building combinations and developing the foundations for the campaign ahead.

Off the field there was further RAF representation with Flt Lt Dave Manning serving as UKAF and RAF Senior Men's Forwards Coach, supported by Team Manager Flt Lt Aidan Duffy and Physiotherapist Sqn Ldr Ellen Slungaard.

Manning said: "This has been a great training week for the team and resulted in a good win against an opposition that included many players competing at Championship level.

"As we continue to prepare for the IDRC next year, the aim is to install processes and structures on the pitch but also, importantly, build a strong cohesion and culture amongst the team, which will be required when we travel to Australia."

UKAF controlled much of the contest and, despite several handling errors and a high penalty count making for a stop-start feel to the clash, the Service stars' dominance was rewarded with a deserved victory, providing positive momentum as attention now turns towards the annual Remembrance fixtures in November.

Aviator Prescott capped an excellent performance by pouncing on a loose ball late in the game before sprinting in unopposed to score beneath the posts.

● Follow UKAF rugby union on Instagram @ukafrugby.

RUGBY LEAGUE

League squad warms up with Teachers win and Spain tour



REIGN IN SPAIN: Hopes are high for Inter-Services after a successful overseas tour

SERVICE RUGBY league stars are hoping to give GB Teachers a lesson as they continue their drive towards the IS championship next month.

Hot off their overseas training camp in Valencia, where head coach Sgt James Hutchinson oversaw his first overseas clash, the team are set to take on the President's Cup winning Teachers, who will provide a stern test.

A high level of opponent is exactly what Hutchinson wants. He said: "They are a strong side this year, so exactly what we need. They won the President's Cup, beating UKAF and England Students.

"We beat them two years ago, but they have changed clearly since then, but we did have players in the UKAF set-up who have seen them close up."

Having seen their Challenge Cup tilt frozen off and then cancelled due to operational duties earlier in the year, the team then faced Wales Students near

Cardiff, losing 28-12 in April, with Hutchinson and his backroom staff taking advantage of their weakened team to eye up new talent.

He said: "With our team missing cross code players, as it's Union's IS time of year, we ran our eye over new players.

"Spanish RL contacted us earlier in the year to help grow the sport out there, which was great. The tour helped bond the team and it was the first overseas game for me, which was great. I really enjoyed it.

"You end up going home each day after camps in the UK but overseas tour are immersed in rugby league, so it's great. It's also great that I can add coaching an overseas tour to my CV."

Hutchinson added: "The last time we won the Inters, the lads had come back from a New Zealand tour, so hopefully that is the same again after Spain."



SPRINT KING:
AS1 Cam Tindle (left)
and AS1 Elliott Knight
(second from right)

ATHLETICS

Athletes make a splash at IS

DURING ONE of the hottest days of the year a strong team of RAF athletes produced a superb runners-up display at the Inter-Services Track & Field Championships at Aldershot.

RAF Athletics chairman Gp Capt Ben Trapnell said: "The depth and talent of this year's squad, made up of both new and returning athletes, put us in a strong position to beat the Army, but we ended a commendable 14 points behind in second."

The women's team produced an

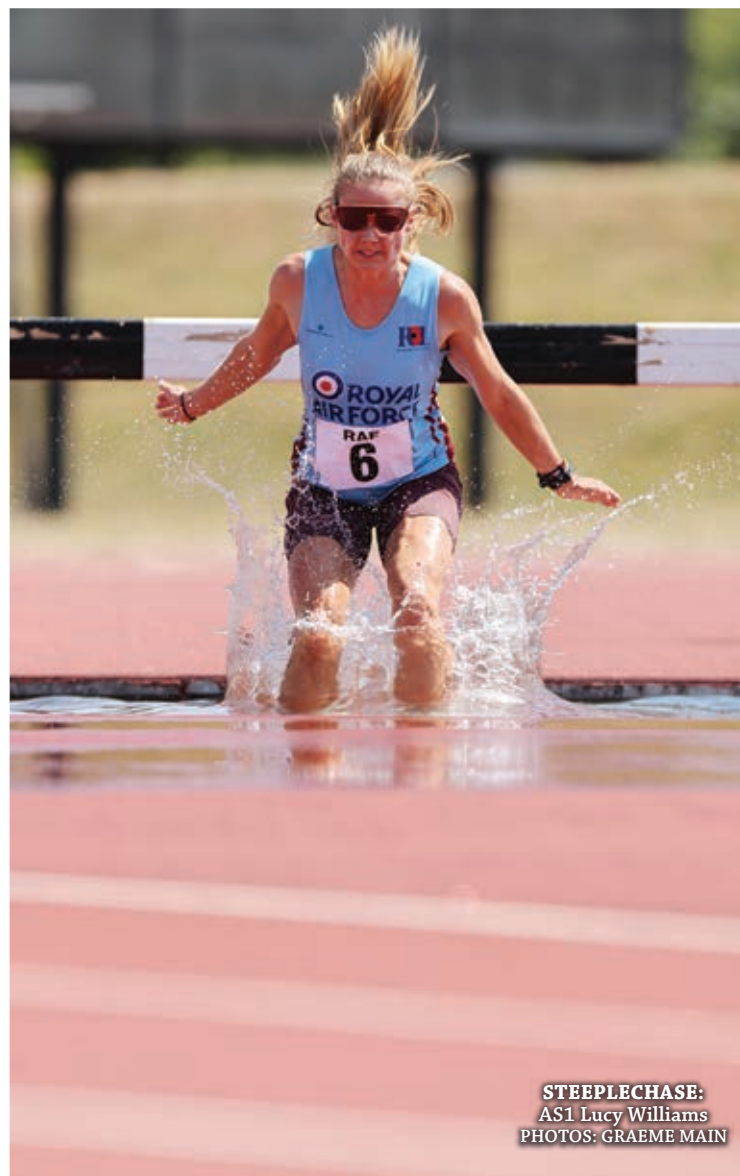
Rare sprint double for King Cam

outstanding performance, with Sgt Laura Hughes (100m, 400m and Long Jump), Cpl Alex Tetley (800m), Flt Lt Aisha Naibe-Wey (400mH 4x100m), AS1 Katie Irving (100mH and High Jump) and AS1 Gemma Barnsdale (Discus, Shot and Hammer) all coming away as Inter-Service Champions.

There were also exceptional performances across multiple disciplines from Cpl Hannah McCabe (200m, 400m, 4x100m) and Cpl Elli Robinson (1500m, 5000m) and both women's relay teams put up a fantastic fight with the 4x400m team stealing the show finishing more than 22 seconds ahead of the Army in second place.

The men's team performed at a consistently high level, with AS1 Cameron Tindle (100 and 200m), AS1 Joe Harris (800m), Flt Lt Mike Kallenberg (5000m), AS1 Dan Thomas (110mH, Long Jump and Discus) and AS1 Riley Hawkins (Hammer, Shot) leaving as champions in their events.

For the second year running, Tindle claimed gold in both the 100m and 200m events, accomplishing a rare sprinting double.



STEEPLECHASE:
AS1 Lucy Williams
PHOTOS: GRAEME MAIN

CRICKET

Afghan women play UKAF in historic T20 match



REFUGEES: Afghan women's team at Cambridge University

PHOTO: DIK NG

FENNER'S CRICKET ground Cambridge was the venue for a historic match as UKAF played the Afghan Refugee Women's team in a T20 clash.

The clash, at the stunning university site, went the way of the military team, who won by 52 runs. It was one of two games held on the day for the team formed in 2021 after 23 Afghanistan Cricket Board female players fled their country.

The tourists won the toss and elected to bowl, striking in the first over – Fg Off Ellie Stanley caught leg before wicket off the bowling of Friba Hotak, with the

third ball of the innings.

UKAF soon steadied the ship – a solid 51 from Cpl Lois Thornton the highlight of their 20 overs, finishing on 149 for 7.

In reply, the visitors lost early wickets and never really found their rhythm as the military bowlers kept up the pressure.

Team captain Capt Connie Cant bagged herself a hat trick as Afghanistan could only total 97 for 9.

FS Lucy Farmer, who deployed on Op Herrick tours in 2009 and 2013, said: "I think it's awesome that the girls have got this team together and they've had the

chance to come to the UK and play during the T20 World Cup, what a better time to do it.

"To come and play in the UK and to get better and hopefully, one day, get themselves to a World Cup, whether it be T20 or one-day, I think it's absolutely fantastic. I loved playing with them today, they were a loud bunch, I'll give them that.

"I don't think you need to be in the military to understand the impressive nature of this tour and what these girls are doing, how important it is for women's sport, women's rights and everything they stand for."

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

CYCLING

Campbell IS road race win a first for the RAF

'Outnumbered' corporal outguns Army in Chitterne

Daniel Abrahams

EXTREME HEAT on Salisbury Plain tested all the riders at this year's Inter-Services road racing, with Cpl Euan Campbell's historic win a first for RAF riding.

The Army-hosted race over a 43-mile Chitterne route through the heart of the Plain meant a very open, windy and hilly course, with 30°C temperatures meaning team support played as important a role as the riders' sweat and power.

With water and nutrition being handed out across the route, the ladies race saw riders complete three and a half laps of the course.

The team of six aviators was all part of a settled opening lap, before attacks started, which were chased down several times, eventually leading to two riders finally breaking away, with a second chasing bunch which included Sqn Ldr Vicky Webb.

After a sprint finish, Webb was the top RAF rider in sixth, with Cpl Sarah Toms seventh, Cpl Laura Sheppard 10th, Wg Cdr Emma Duckett 12th, Flt Lt Georgina Maguire 13th, Cpl Kat Robinson 17th and Flt Lt Emily Wymer 18th.

Completing five and a half

laps of the course, the men's race was split by RAF rider Campbell after 20 minutes.

The triumphant aviator said: "I knew going into the race that it was going to be a hot day on an extremely attritional course.

"I spent time preparing mentally and physically for the potential outcomes, heat acclimatisation and nutrition, but never foresaw one of the Army's strongest riders try to go clear over the first ascent of the main climb 20 minutes into a three-hour race.

"I knew I had to dig deep and follow. We formed an alliance with one other Army rider who followed us up the climb, working together until the final lap.

It was a risky strategy, being outnumbered, but one I felt I could convert if it came to a sprint.

"The heat started to take its toll after two hours of racing, but we'd managed to create a large enough gap going into the final lap, where the Army riders started to try to use their numbers to crack me.

"I'm thankful for the team for trusting me to bring home the win despite being outnumbered. I'm honoured to be the first RAF rider in history to win the Inter-Service Road Race."

Three further top-10 finishes



RISKY TACTIC: Cpl Euan Campbell formed alliance with Army riders. Top, ladies race
PHOTOS: GRAEME MAIN, SOLDIER MAGAZINE

saw AS1 James Bunting in 4th, Sgt Rich Summerbell sixth and Flt Lt Ed Calow ninth; with Cpl Will

Lewis 11th, Cpl Danny Hedley 12th, AS1 Jack Ramsbottom 13th, AS1 Ben Southgate 15th, Sgt

Dan Watts 16th and Fg Off Luke Brookes 26th.

SWIMMING



'INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE': RAF swimmer Cpl Kyle Booth at the Games

PHOTOS: TEAM WALES

Games bid over

RAF SWIMMER Cpl Kyle Booth's dreams of a Commonwealth Games medal in Glasgow ended after he failed to reach the final of either the 50m or 100m breaststroke.

He did make the semis in the shorter event, having missed out in the 100m earlier in the Games.

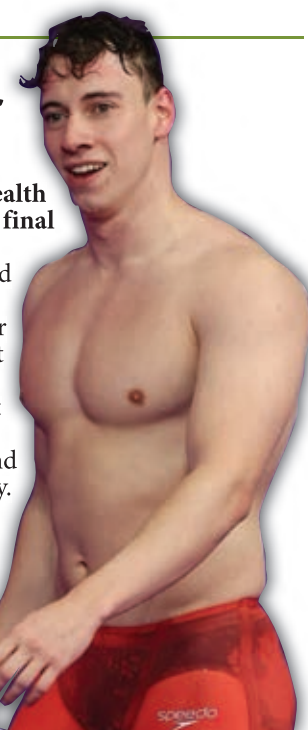
But that would be as far as the aviator, swimming for Wales, would go as he finished 13th in the 50m, and did not progress to the final.

He told *RAF News*: "I've had an absolutely amazing time at these Commonwealth Games.

"Of course, I would've loved to have made both semis and finals, but unfortunately things just didn't quite go my way. That's sport sometimes.

"Even so, it's been an incredible experience and walking out into that arena in front of an amazing home crowd is something I'll never forget."

Having missed out on the 100m semi-finals by just 0.42 of a second to Cook Islander Jacob Storey, who took the last qualifying spot, Booth finished eighth in the 50m qualifiers two days later and 13th in the semis.



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

SWIMMING

Swimmers end IS drought

Women win after **29** years and men get first title for **7**

Daniel Abrahams

IT WAS all to play for at this year's Inter-Services Aquatics Championships as the RAF hoped to continue their 100th anniversary dominance at the Army-hosted event.

Continue it they did with a 29-year wait ended in the women's swimming event as the team came out on top at Aldershot Garrison Swimming Pool, with the men making it a perfect double.

Ladies swim team captain Fg Off Horsfall-Mather said: "We're bursting with pride and exhilaration after such a historic victory. The teamwork's finally paid off, breaking a 29-year drought for the women and seven years for the men."

The winning did not stop there, as the women's diving team won the championship for the fourth year running, taking a clean sweep of the springboard

and platform podium, with a third in the open springboard.

Three days of action kicked off with the Female and Open water polo, with the RAF being able to run their collective eye over their opponents before entering the fray on day two.

The diving opened day two; a clean sweep in the springboard with Sgt Goodman first, Cpl Horan second and AS1 Ashwood third. Goodman again topped the podium in the platform, with Sqn Ldr Trotter second and Horan on the podium again, this time in third, with WO Davidson third in the Open springboard – securing the team win.

The water polo saw a 13-7 defeat for the women against the Army, while the men won 13-9 in the open event over RN, losing their second match for the title against the Army 12-4.

The women's tournament decider saw the RAF face the



Cam takes sprint gold double at the Inters

See p25



MAKING HISTORY: RAF Swimming teams are ensuring 100th anniversary is a great success

PHOTO: GRAEME MAIN

Navy and a stunning 9-5 win for the aviators meant they missed out on the championship on goal difference alone.

The final day saw the aviators grab a first and third in the women's 800m freestyle swimming, for Flt Lt Dodwell and Sgt Forster respectively.

Several records tumbled, with standout performances from AS1 Bryant (Men's 100m Backstroke), AR Maticiu (Women's 100m Breaststroke) and Off Cdt Turner (Women's 200m Individual Medley), propelling the RAF into a 20-point advantage, before both RAF 4 x 50m medley relay teams

shattered long-standing records to clinch gold.

The momentum continued as the 6 x 50m freestyle relay teams secured further gold medals, culminating in the mixed 6 x 50m freestyle relay team sealing the final gold of the day as the RAF claimed all relay golds.

HOCKEY

Benson's 7th heaven at Hockey Cup

BENSON SECURED a brace of thumping 7-1 wins to snaffle the UK Armed Forces Tri-Service Hockey Cup at RAF Halton.

Benson began their campaign in emphatic fashion, sweeping aside 8 Training Battalion REME 7-1 with a display of authority and precision that suggested they may take some stopping in this year's competition.

Played in punishing heat, the opening fixture demanded resilience as much as quality. From the outset, they imposed themselves on the contest, with a composed central defensive partnership of AS1 Alex Naughtaly and AS1 Chris Darnley. Nullifying the REME pressure allowed Benson to dictate the tempo.



DOMINANT: Benson (in blue)

The breakthrough arrived after a spell of sustained pressure, with Sgt Martin Sully applying

the finishing touch from a clever midfield pass by Cpl Paul Goldie. Sgt Scott Saunders brilliantly

converted the second, before Cpl Sam Nutt added a third.

If the first half belonged to Benson, the second merely reinforced the extent of their superiority. While the heat understandably slowed the tempo at times, Benson's discipline never wavered.

Nutt struck again to restore daylight between the sides, with REME having found the net, before Saunders completed his brace and Cpl Callum Seers provided the finishing flourish.

Another seven-goal masterclass saw Benson crush HMS Nelson in emphatic fashion.

Cpl Mike Hookway netted first, before Cpl Callum Seers doubled the advantage with a composed finish, then Sgt Ryan O'Loughlin added a third and

Cpl Nutt a fourth, all before half-time.

To their credit, HMS Nelson emerged after the break with renewed determination and were rewarded with a consolation goal. Cpl Paul Goldie restored the four-goal cushion with a well-taken finish, while Flt Lt Katya Slater capped an excellent team move with Benson's sixth goal.

There was still time for Hookway to have the final say. The forward completed his brace with another clinical finish, bringing the curtain down on a polished and professional display that never dipped below an impressive standard.

8 Training Battalion REME beat HMS Nelson 5-2 in the middle clash of the event, but the story was all RAF.



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R'n'R



Win moving
true story on
Blu-ray ● p3

**Everybody's talking
about Jamie**

● See
page 5



Film review: page 8 + Announcements: page 6 + Puzzles: page 8

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Theatre
Oh Zeus!
UK tour

Don't myth out

KINGS OF comedy Le Navet Bete – creators of hit family shows *Dracula: The Bloody Truth*, *King Arthur* and *Treasure Island* – have announced an extension of *Oh Zeus!*, their riotous ride through the world of Greek mythology.

When the stability of Olympus is threatened by the marriage of Zeus' daughter Hebe to a mere mortal, the King of the Gods hatches a plan to derail the wedding. Three actors play nearly 40 characters in this mythical farce through Ancient Greece, the Underworld and back.

Behind the chaos lies a costume rail worthy of Olympus itself: the cast of three race through 39 costumes and a staggering 84 costume changes – 63 of which are lightning-fast – as they hurtle between gods, mortals and monsters at breakneck speed.

Le Navet Bete – French for the silly turnip – is comprised of Al Dunn, Nick Bunt and Matt

Silly turnips roar through 84 costume changes in Greek romp



ON A ROLL: Bunt as Gregg

Freeman. Since 2008 the trio have been touring the UK and internationally with their unique and chaotic style of physical comedy and have earned the reputation as one of the UK's leading midscale theatre companies.

Based in Exeter, Devon and supported by organisations such as Arts Council England, the Exeter Northcott Theatre and the Exeter Phoenix, they have been on a continuous mission to create and tour hilarious, physical and accessible comedy theatre using creative and engaging storytelling for absolutely everyone (ages 4 to 104), said a spokesperson.

The *Oh Zeus!* 2026-27 tour will visit: The Dukes Lancaster (15-19 Sept); Lighthouse Poole (25-26 Sept); Queen's Theatre, Hornchurch (6-10 Oct); New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme (15-17 Oct); Mayflower Studios, Southampton (9-13 Feb); Theatre Royal Plymouth (28 Feb); Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford (11-



KING OF THE GODS: Blond bombshell Zeus (Al Dunn) ©Matt Crockett/Rebecca Pitt

13 March); Salisbury Playhouse (18-20 March); Gulbenkian Arts Centre, Canterbury (2-3 Apr); Newcastle Theatre Royal (9-10 Apr); Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds (13-17 Apr); Theatre by the Lake, Keswick (27 Apr-1 May); Harrogate Theatre (13-15 May); Everyman Theatre, Liverpool (17-19 June) and Mercury Theatre Colchester (16-

19 September). Further dates to be announced.

Whilst *Oh Zeus!* is suitable for ages 12+, there will be additional 'no kids allowed' performances held at many tour venues – expect the same show but with more adult humour, swearing and added naughtiness.

● Go to: lenavetbete.com for more information.



Cinema
David Hockney at the Royal Academy of Arts
In cinemas now

In tribute to David Hockney

EXHIBITION ON SCREEN'S 2017 film *David Hockney at the Royal Academy of Arts* has returned to UK cinemas as a tribute to the recently-deceased artist.

The 80-minute film features intimate and in-depth interviews with Hockney, focusing on two blockbuster exhibitions held in 2012 and 2016 at the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

Widely considered Britain's most popular artist, David Hockney was a global sensation with exhibitions in London, New York, Paris and beyond, attracting millions of visitors worldwide.

Director Phil Grabsky secured privileged access to craft this cinematic celebration of a 21st century master of creativity.

Grabsky is a BAFTA-winning British documentary filmmaker who has received multiple awards for his directing, writing, producing and cinematography. In 2009, Phil and his colleagues began work on a



PEOPLE'S ARTIST: David Hockney, Los Angeles, March 9, 2016 © David Hockney
Photo: Jean-Pierre Gonçalves de Lima

new arts genre for the cinema: *Exhibition on Screen*. This brings major art exhibitions – and the intimate biographies of the artists – to cinema, mainstream television and home entertainment platforms worldwide.

Exhibition on Screen now plays in 1,500 cinemas and more than 60 countries worldwide and has produced 36 films on artists including Turner and Constable, Leonardo da Vinci, Vincent van Gogh, Rembrandt, Hockney, Raphael and many more.

2023's *Vermeer – The Greatest Exhibition* is the UK's most successful documentary film on an artist ever released and is in the top 20 UK documentaries of any genre, said a spokesperson.

● Go to: seventh-art.com to find a screening near you.



Competition
Madfabulous (12)
Out now on Blu-ray, DVD & digital



Celebration of 'otherness'

INSPIRED BY a true story, *Madfabulous* stars rising star and BAFTA nominee Callum Scott Howells (*It's a Sin*, *The Beautiful Game*) alongside a stellar supporting cast of three-time BAFTA nominee Rupert Everett (*The Happy Prince*, *An Ideal Husband*), Ruby Stokes (*Jay Kelly*, *Bridgerton*), BAFTA winner Siobhán McSweeney (*Derry Girls*, *Alice Through the Looking Glass*), Louise Brealey (*Sherlock*, *Brian and Charles*), Tom Rhys Harries (*White Lines*, *The Gentlemen*) and Paul Rhys (*Wuthering Heights*, *Saltburn*).

When the flamboyant Henry Paget arrives in 1890s North Wales to claim his aristocratic inheritance, his theatrical flair and defiant eccentricities send shockwaves through the upper class elite, much to the amusement of the local townspeople.

Alongside his spirited cousin, Lily (Stokes) and loyal butler Gelert (Everett), Henry tries to carve out his own identity as the Fifth Marquess, navigating suffocating traditions, scheming relatives, and the long shadow cast by his estranged father.

Described as a riotous, uncompromising celebration of otherness, the film's world premiere at the 40th BFI Flare: London LGBTQIA+ Film Festival was sold out.

We have copies of this glorious film on Blu-ray up for grabs. To be in with a chance



FLAMBOYANT: The Marquess (Callum Scott Howells, (left) and butler Gelert (Rupert Everett)

of winning one, answer this question correctly:

Who plays butler Gelert in Madfabulous?

Email your answer, marked Madfabulous competition, to: tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk or post it to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, HP14 4UE to arrive by August 21. Please include your full postal address. Please send email answers to the above address only, competition entries to other email addresses will not be considered.

R'n'R



Theatre
Back in Business
UK tour



SUITS YOU: Dianne Buswell and Vito Coppola get ready for action

Strictly stars Vito and Dianne are Back in Business

STRICTLY COME DANCING winners Dianne Buswell and Vito Coppola are heading back on tour together with a new show – *Back in Business*.

Touring major UK theatres in spring 2027, *Back in Business* is set to explode with the passion, personality and electric chemistry that have made the dynamic duo audience favourites across the country, said a spokesperson.

From fiery Latin routines to timeless ballroom classics – and everything in between – each number is infused with style, storytelling and emotion. Created by Dianne and Vito, alongside a world-class promises glamour, rhythm and pure joy in one unforgettable night of entertainment, the spokesperson added.

The pair will be returning to the stage together for the first time since their sold-out 2025 theatre tour, *Red Hot & Ready*.

Dianne (pictured right) said: “It’ll be awesome to be back on stage in front of live



audiences in 2027. I can’t wait to dust off my dancing shoes and get back out there with my partner in crime after some time away being busy having a baby. Coming back to the stage as a mum will be completely different to our past tours and I can’t wait for Bowden to see mummy in action.”

Vito added: “I am so excited to be back on tour with my friend and sister Gorji Dianne. We have so much to share, so much love to give to everyone. We are so looking forward to performing for our beautiful audience all over the UK in 2027. Hope you are ready for us, because we are back in business!”

The pair have both previously lifted BBC *Strictly Come Dancing*’s coveted Glitterball Trophy: Vito with actress Ellie Leach in 2023 and Dianne with comedian Chris McCausland in 2024.

The tour starts in Truro on March 31 and finishes at Cardiff’s New Theatre on April 18.

● Go to: [DianneandVito.live](#) for a full list of tour dates.



TV
The Rapture
BBC

Is Gabs outFoxed by teen murderer Bethany?

HIGH-STAKES thriller *The Rapture* is continuing to captivate BBC One audiences on Sunday nights. Starring Ruth Madeley and India Amarteifio and filmed in Wales, the five-part series is adapted from Liz Jensen’s bestselling novel.

It’s set during a heatwave and focuses on psychologist Dr Gabs Fox (Madeley) who is left paralysed after a car accident that killed her husband. Gabs starts a new job at a psychiatric hospital where she is assigned 17-year-old inmate Bethany Krall (Amarteifio).

Two years before, Bethany was sectioned for the brutal murder of her mother, Carys. The case shocked the nation, not least because Bethany’s father, Leonard (Sam Hazeldine), is the charismatic leader of the Faith Way, a spiritual movement with millions of online followers.

Bethany seems to know private details about Gabs’ life and insists she can see visions of the future, which she communicates through

disturbing sketches of disasters: storms, fires and floods. Bethany’s nurse Rafiq insists Bethany’s predictions always come true, but Gabs is sceptical, determined to find a clinical explanation.

As the heat intensifies, Gabs begins to notice unsettling connections between Bethany’s prophetic drawings and the world outside, forcing Gabs to re-examine her assumptions. Could Bethany be innocent after all? If she didn’t kill Carys Krall, who did and why?

Helped by journalist Dick Carwyn (Iwan Rheon) and engineer Frasier Melville (Jack Farthing) Gabs digs deeper into the history of the Kralls. As she falls further down the rabbit hole, she is forced to question – is Bethany telling the truth, or is Gabs being manipulated by a deeply troubled teenager?

The cast also features Gavin & Stacey star Ruth Jones as therapist Mel.

Madeley said: “Gabs is very strong and quite stubborn. I’m not going to give too much away, but



RUTH JONES: Plays therapist Mel

she doesn’t always do things the right way, which I love. Thinking about why a character makes the choices that they do fascinates me.

“She grows a lot over the series – the character arc is huge. She becomes more confident as a wheelchair user and does a lot of firsts in her new life. One thing that I love that never changes is how good she is at her job, and the very essence of who she is – even though it feels like she’s lost it a little bit from the accident, grief and navigating her new life. She’s strong and determined, knows what is right, and does what she

Compiled by Executive Features Editor Tracey Allen



CAT AND MOUSE
GAME: Troubled
Bethany (India
Amarteifio, above)
and psychologist
Gabs (Ruth
Madeley, left).
PHOTOS: BBC/
Mammoth Screen



Music

Banarama

True Confessions

Four decades of Confessions

FORTY YEARS ago Banarama released their third studio album *True Confessions* – it went on to be their most commercially successful, going gold in the US, platinum in Canada and Top 20 across Europe and Australasia.

To celebrate the anniversary, it's being rereleased by the band.

"1986 was a whirlwind for us and it was the year that things ramped up a gear. The success of [the single] *Venus* around the world meant we were lucky enough to visit so many countries and meet so many people. It was a year we'll never forget," said original band member Siobhan.

For *Venus*, a canny Hi-NRG remake of the 1969 *Shocking Blue* hit, Banarama enlisted the production talents of then relative newcomers, Stock Aitken Waterman. The song had been a firm favourite for the band since their onset, and when they caught wind (via the dancefloor) of SAW's beat-driven production of Dead or Alive's *You Spin Me Round (Like a Record)*, they imagined a global smash. And what a global smash *Venus* proved to be: rocketing into the Top 10 in 20 countries, hitting No.1 in six countries, as well as topping both the US Billboard Top 100 and Billboard Dance Charts.

"I remember during a *True Confessions* promo trip to America, we went to Prince's club in Minneapolis.

I couldn't believe it when the DJ put *Venus* on and the whole club ran to the dancefloor, it was amazing," said band member Sara.

1986 also saw music videos take over the world's small screens, with MTV reaching its peak and Banarama joining with their biggest budget video to date. *Venus* featured the girls costumed as (variously) a bat-winged vampire (Sara), a she-devil (Siobhan), a French temptress (Keren) and several Greek goddesses.



Heralding a new relationship with SAW, *True Confessions* began the band's phase of peerless hit singles, which led the trio into the Guinness Book of Records for the highest number of chart entries for an all-female group.

Keren added: "When we originally asked Stock, Aitken and Waterman to produce *Venus* for us, they said it couldn't be done because you couldn't have guitars on a pop record! Thankfully, we were very persuasive because it marked the beginning of a wonderful and really successful working relationship."

The 40-year anniversary editions of *True Confessions* (including a picture disc, a limited edition transparent red version, an expanded double album and a three-CD version) are set for release on August 28.

● Go to: ww2.banarama.co.uk for more details.



Theatre

Everybody's Talking About Jamie

UK tour

10 years of loving Jamie

THE TENTH anniversary tour of the hit musical *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* starts in January 2027, with Ashcon Rahmani and Rebecca Trehearn playing the much-loved roles of Jamie and Margaret New.

Following a record-breaking three-year West End residency, two sold-out UK and Ireland tours and an award-winning film, the critically-acclaimed show will feature a brand new song from lead singer-songwriter of *The Feeling* Dan Gillespie Sells and *Doctor Who* writer Tom MacRae.

The tour will open in Leeds 10 years after the original opening at the Sheffield Crucible prior to the West End, national tours and playing across the world including USA, Korea, Japan and Italy.

Ashcon Rahmani said: "I am beyond thrilled to be making my professional debut playing Jamie in the 10th Anniversary tour of *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*. I grew up with this show, it was the representation I needed as a young queer boy from the north of England to know this could all be possible for me one day, so to



STARS: Ashcon and Rebecca

step into those stilettos and become the representation I once had is truly a dream come true.

"Jamie is iconic and I feel incredibly grateful and excited to start this journey and be sharing the stage with the wonderful Rebecca Trehearn playing my onstage mum."

Rebecca said: "I'm thrilled to be joining the UK tour cast to play Margaret, and to be reuniting with a creative team I adore. The relationship between Margaret and Jamie is truly special and I'm so looking forward to performing alongside Ashcon

and the rest of the company. The musical's celebration of courage, acceptance and being unapologetically yourself feels as relevant now as it did 10 years ago and I can't wait to be part of this beautiful and uplifting show."

Jamie New is 16 and lives on a council estate in Sheffield. He doesn't quite fit in and is terrified about the future. Jamie is going to be a sensation.



Supported by his brilliant loving mum and surrounded by his friends, Jamie overcomes prejudice, beats the bullies and steps out of the darkness, into the spotlight.

The tour kicks off at Leeds Grand Theatre on January 15 and visits venues in Edinburgh, Wolverhampton, High Wycombe, Liverpool, Southampton and Oxford among others, culminating at the Theatre Royal, Newcastle from July 19-24, 2027.

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

needs to do to protect the people around her."

What are the main themes of *The Rapture*?

"There are so many – there's climate change, there's mental health issues, there's disability, there's general female life. The great thing is that the story is so compelling. It's a psychological thriller, so there's a lot going on, and it's high stakes all the time," said Madeley.

What drew her to the project?
She explained: "When *The Rapture* first came to me, I fell in love with the character – her story, her grief, her flaws. Seeing a disabled lead is always really exciting and knowing I can play that well and be the right person for it is even more exciting. I love her flaws. I never want to play a character who's too perfect. It's not real."

She added: "There's a bond between Bethany and Gabs that is established, a role that another woman can have in your life, and that is really beautiful for me. It's an interesting way to tell the story of two women... it's very cat and

mouse throughout."

Amarteifio said of her character: "Bethany goes on a huge journey. It's a journey of regaining trust in herself, in the adults around her, and in authority and people in authority. She begins to have an understanding that there is corruption within the people that you're supposed to depend on the most, her understanding of her own faith is like a through line throughout the whole series, but also just growing up in general."

She added: "What's amazing about Liz Jensen's book is that it was written over a decade ago, but if anything, it's more relevant now in terms of climate change, how we treat people with mental health needs, and how we also, as a society, ostracise people who need the most help. It's important to talk about that, because it is an actuality of what's going on. I guess the fact that we get to tackle those issues head on is something I'm proud to be a part of."

● The full series of *The Rapture* is on iPlayer: bbc.co.uk



Your Announcements

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

Death

GRIFFITHS Michael John. Departed the fix and passed away on July 23, aged 91. Born in Southampton on December 15, 1934. Mike joined the RAF College Cranwell, Number 66 Entry, in 1953.

Upon graduating, he was awarded the Sword of Honour in recognition of his obvious skill and potential as a leader. After flying training on Vampires, Mike joined 54 Squadron, in the autumn of 1956, flying Hawker Hunters.

His natural ability at calmly dealing with people saw him posted as an aide-de-camp within Fighter Command.

He saw out his time within the RAF flying Victor Bombers before being launched into a stellar career in the brewing industry, rising to board director at Allied Lyons.

He married Jenny, now departed, and leaves a legacy of five children, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Subsequently married Penelope, now deceased.

Mike, ringmaster to the Griffiths family, will be remembered on Wednesday, August 19, somewhere in Wiltshire. For more details please contact Clarkson's Funeral Directors: 01225 426822.



Mike Griffiths

Seeking

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

DO you know anyone who trained at one of the six British Flying Training Schools in America in World War II? The Falcon Field Association: The Next Generation is holding its next annual event in Edinburgh on October 3-4. This year we are widening our invitation to include anyone connected with any of the BFTSs. If you learned to fly at a BFTS or are related to a pilot who trained there, we'd love to hear from you. Please email Kathryn Masters: falconfieldassociationtng@gmail.com or call: 07885 378090.

Reunions

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

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

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

Associations

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

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

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

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

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



IN MEMORY:
Charlotte Hope

Play golf for Lottie's Way

BACK FOR 2026 is Golf Day, Swing for a Cause, in aid of Lottie's Way, the Charlotte Hope Foundation – set up in 2024 in memory and to continue the legacy of Charlotte, the 19-year-old daughter of retired Wg Cdr Neil Hope. Charlotte tragically died in 2022.

The charity raises funds to provide access to resources and education for underprivileged young adults and children worldwide.

The Golf Day will take place

on Wednesday, September 16 at The Telford Hotel Spa and Golf Resort. Individual or team entries are welcome – £90 per player and £360 per team. The fee includes bacon butties and a hot drink on arrival, 19 holes of golf to play, beat the pro, longest drive, nearest the pin, a raffle and auction and a post-round meal.

To enter your interest email: admin@lottiesway.com or: markmismales@hotmail.com or send a message via the website: lottiesway.com.



Mosquito model up for sale

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

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

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

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

Experts offer free workshop

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

Stronger Relationships, Stronger Service Lives will cover emotional

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

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

● Goto: christinepatersondeacon.com for more information



How to use our service

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

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

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AUF WIEDERSEHEN:
The last British vehicle
leaves Fassberg Air Base
PHOTO: Archive Berlin
Airlift Museum Fassberg



Handover marks anniversary

CELEBRATIONS ARE planned on August 27 to mark the 70th anniversary of the handover of Fassberg Air Base to the newly re-established German Air Force.

2026 marks the 77th anniversary of the last flight of the Berlin Airlift from Fassberg. Fassberg Air Base, the Berlin Airlift Association and the municipality of Fassberg will hold a joint commemorative event. After a commemorative ceremony Berlin Airlift Museum hosts a reception for guests followed by guided tours of the Fassberg Airlift Museum.

A lecture by Lt Col Dr Heiner Moellers on the history

of Fassberg Air Base in the former officers' mess will be followed by a guided tour of the special exhibition *70 Years of the Luftwaffe*.

And a charity concert by the Erfurt Air Force Band in aid of the Berlin Airlift Association and the Airlift Education Fund of the municipality of Fassberg will be held in the former mess garden.

Paul Hicks, Berlin Airlift Museum's spokesman, said: "Admission to the events as of 3pm is free. You can look forward to an exciting and informative day in Fassberg."

● Go to: airlift-berlin.com for more details.

Youth programme gets grant boost

THE WIMBLEDON Foundation has awarded a £150,000 grant to the RAF Benevolent Fund to support its Airplay youth programme over the next three years.

The funding will help sustain the Fund's flagship youth service, enabling it to continue providing safe, inclusive and engaging activities for children and young people from RAF families across 24 RAF stations and online through Airplay Connect, said a spokesperson for the charity.

Sheila Brazil, the Fund's Trust and Foundations Manager, said: "As a trusted and longstanding partner, the Wimbledon Foundation understands the challenges faced by RAF families, and this funding will help us to make a meaningful difference to the lives of RAF children and young people."

Airplay supports young people from serving RAF families, many of whom face the unique challenges that come with military life, including frequent changes of home, school and friendship groups.

The spokesperson added:



FRIENDSHIP: Airplay at AirFest 2025, RAF Wyton PHOTO: Matt Pereira, RAFBF

"Airplay provides continuity, stability and a sense of belonging, helping young people build confidence, resilience and lasting friendships."

"The 2025 Airplay Annual Review found that 96 per cent of members agree that Airplay has helped them to settle in when they have moved to a new station, as well as 96 per cent of parents who feel that Airplay is helping

their child to be more confident.

"In 2025, Airplay delivered more than 6,944 hours of youth activities for RAF children and young people. The Fund invested more than £1.3 million to ensure the consistent delivery of high-quality support throughout the year, with vital contributions from charitable trusts, foundations and individual donors helping to make this possible."

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Prize Crossword
No. 415

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the 14 letters in yellow squares to find an RAF rank.

Across

- 1. Kilmer bearing old-fashioned depression (4)
- 8. Am re-usable, becoming quantifiable (10)
- 9. Piazza with potential is quite expensive (8)
- 10. World loses its head over part of the brain (4)
- 12. Some area personnel use RAF aircraft...(6)
- 14. ...to swing alien missile (6)
- 15. Ferocious fire destroys church (6)
- 17. Refuse to work RAF operation (6)
- 18. Duck chap in foreign country (4)
- 19. Ban dingo from old RAF station (8)
- 21. 'Top Gun' actor's fashionable on holiday transport (6,4)
- 22. Consumes poet after initial loss (4)

Down

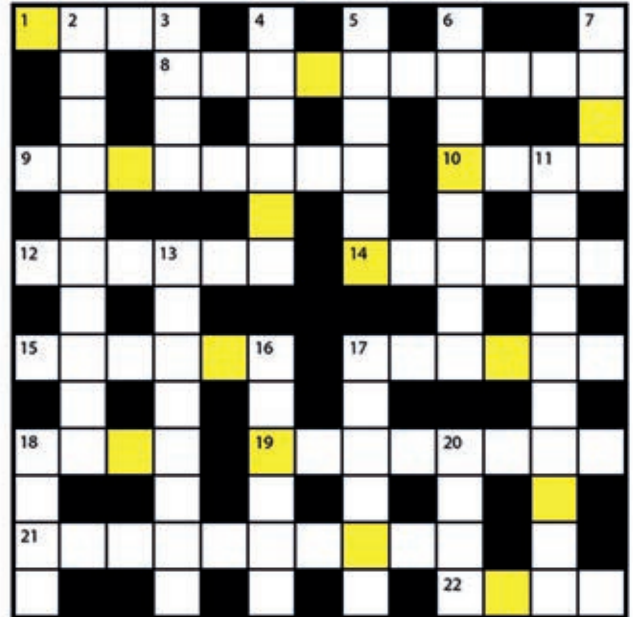
- 2. Like gold dust, amateur imp undergoes transformation (2,1,7)
- 3. Initially eligible man marries attractive Austen heroine (4)
- 4. And 5 Down. Barrow boy Orion on RAF plane (6,6)
- 5. See 4 Down
- 6. Taxi the French vehicle on transport system (5,3)
- 7. Present for now (4)
- 11. Painful moment in tennis? (5,5)
- 13. RAF operative compounds Iona's persecution complex (8)
- 16. Delighted newspaperman embraces the dead (6)
- 17. Feeble southern star (6)
- 18. A fairy tale beginning on one occasion (4)
- 20. Be open-mouthed at grand mimic (4)

Name:

Address:

RAF rank:Crossword No. 415

The winners of our Prize Crossword and Prize Su Doku puzzles will receive a recent top book title – please send your entries to the address printed in the adjacent Su Doku panel, to arrive by August 21, 2026.



Prize Crossword No. 414 solution

Across – 7. Marham 8. Meteor 10. Lasagne 11. APKWS 12. Arno 13. Igloo 17. Flute 18. Vera 22. Crews 23. Inhuman 24. Mallet 25. Drones
Down – 1. Amalgam 2. Present 3. Cargo 4. Lebanon 5. Leeks 6. Crush 9. Wedgetail 14. Gloster 15. Leeming 16. Madness 19. Scamp 20. Cello 21. Sharp

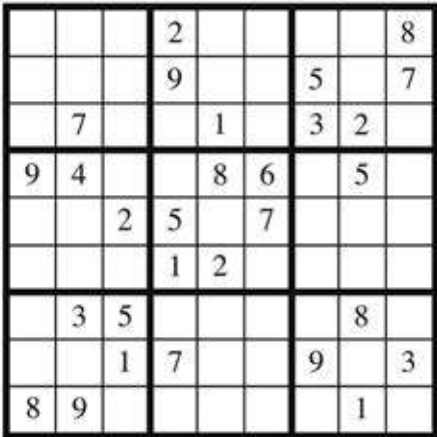
Prize Crossword No. 413 winner is: CJ Hunter, Surrey



Prize Su Doku
No. 425

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

Solutions should be sent in a sealed envelope marked 'Su Doku' with the number in the top left-hand corner to: RAF News, Room 68, Lancaster Building, HQ Air Command, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP14 4UE, to arrive by August 21, 2026. The winner of Su Doku No: 422 is: Mary Jones, Anglsey and of No 423 is: Mr R Cossey, Norwich.



Solution to Su Doku No. 424

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

A little bit country, a little bit rock'n'roll



NEW SOLO ALBUM: Brandon Flowers

THE KILLERS' Brandon Flowers will release *Thrasher*, his first solo album in over a decade, on August 21.

Flowers has also announced details of a headline tour across North America, the UK and Ireland this autumn, with UK dates including a special show at London's Royal Albert Hall on October 15.

Recorded in Nashville at Historic RCA Studio A with long-time producers Shawn Everett and Jonathan Rado, the new album features many of Music City's most renowned players, including long-time Gillian Welch collaborator David Rawlings on guitar, prolific and influential pedal steel player Bruce Bouton, and 85-year-old Charlie McCoy, the legendary harmonica player whose signature playing graces all four of Bob Dylan's iconic Nashville records.

Flowers was a teenager in small-town Utah, taken with the new wave and post-punk and Britpop his brother had shown him, yet spending just as much time

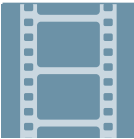
driving the countryside with his dad and hearing Johnny Cash and Waylon Jennings songs reflect his surroundings back at him. Those seemingly disparate influences have converged in Flowers' music for 20 years, but he only rarely wrote about that chapter of his life.

As he entered his 40s, he began reflecting not only on the whirlwind of his adulthood as a rock star, but also on his formative years in Utah. Ideas swirled, then arrived in the form of the music that first taught him about storytelling. They culminated in *Thrasher*.

He said: "As I've gotten older, I've found my way back to my father's music – Country-Western (as he called it) – and discovered that the stories I carry really feel most at home in the skin of this beautiful American tradition."

Flowers also plays live in October in Bournemouth, Bristol, Manchester, Glasgow and Birmingham.

Go to: brandonflowersmusic.com for all tour dates.



Film review

Pescador (TBC)

Out now

Mysteries of the deep in stunning Costa Rica

A PAIR of estranged American siblings both find themselves in Costa Rica: one on the hunt for a rare freshwater fish that few people have ever seen, and the other, more mysteriously, appearing out of the sea – in this spiritual debut from writer-director Harry Domenico Rossi.

The sister, Katie (Alex Wanebo), is a marine biologist travelling alone – much to the distress of one local who insists it is very dangerous to do so.

When she finds herself in the company of some other travellers, she manages to cause offence and soon lands alone again. Defensive of her privilege, having never worked a job but with enough money to be comfortable, Katie is shown hitchhiking and hustling to get around the island, trying to track down this mythical fish.

Halfway through the film, a fisherman (Mario Chacón) – pescador in Spanish – comes across a talking lobster, who grants his wish for a son, but with a warning: if he does not love his newfound son with all of his heart, he will pay a great price. Lo and behold, a drowning American (Spencer Bang) appears amongst his fishing nets, and a paternal relationship blooms after some initial resistance.

There is a mystical quality to *Pescador*, subtler than magical realism. It is an intentionally slow film that is immersed in its tropical location, with much time spent simply observing the characters in this space, if not looking at the space itself: the



SANTA CLAWS: Trent (Spencer Bang, left) was a gift to the pescador (Mario Chacón, right) from a talking lobster

landscape, wildlife, or even the locals. Both siblings' journeys become entwined with the people they meet, though not without conflict.

The pacing alone marks this as an ambitious project, and it is this confidence, paired with the cinematography, that carries it off. The performances of the principal cast are a little uneven, perhaps made more noticeable because of the naturalistic approach of the many non-actors they play against.

An impressive and confident debut that is slow and thoughtful, with just a touch of magic.

Three roundels out of five Review by Sam Cooney