

**The Forces' favourite paper**

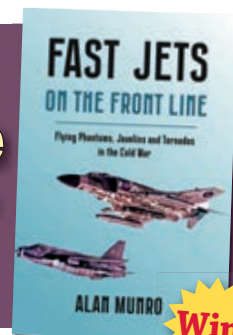
**Service health chief named**

● See page 9



**RAF hot jets in the Cold War**

● See R'n'R page 5



**ROYAL AIR FORCE**

Friday, August 8, 2025  
Edition No.1614

**Only 99p**

# RAF News

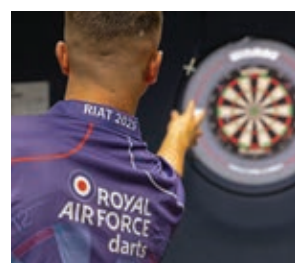


**Veteran WOs who go with the Yeo – meet the Air Power at The Tower**

See pages 14-15



**Darts**  
**Arrows fly at Leeming**



● See page 24

**Sailing**  
**RAF rule the waves**



● See page p27

**Rugby league**  
**Tri-nations dominance**



● See page p28

## Pacific heights



### Simon Mander

F-35 NATIONS are raising the airpower stakes in the South Pacific as Allied forces launch the biggest ever war drill to take place off the coast of Australia.

Air combat sorties have seen RAAF, RAF and US F-35 pilots swap seats and fly each other's

aircraft in a world first to demonstrate the interoperability of the Lockheed fifth-generation stealth fighter.

More than 3,000 UK military personnel joined 35,000 frontline fighters from 19 countries for Exercise Talisman Sabre to counter rising tensions in the region and safeguard global trade routes.

● Continues on page 3



# BiteSize

“It’s like *Love Island* in the Raven Tower. Georgie paired with Jubilee but now she’s gone off with Harris,”



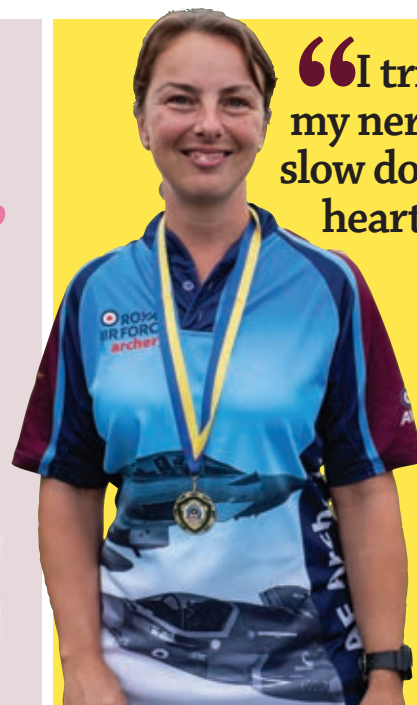
RAF veteran and Yeoman Warder Tracey Machin  
See p14-15

“Strap yourselves in and get ready for a wild ride,”



Springwatch star’s live shows on the natural world  
See R’n’R p4

“I tried to calm my nerves and slow down my heart rate,”



Sgt Ellie Spinks wins national archery event in golden arrow shoot-out  
See p24



**ROYAL AIR FORCE**  
**RAF News**

## RAF News

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

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

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

**News Editor:** Simon Mander

**Sport:** sports@rafnews.co.uk

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

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

# AUKUS treaty signed

## Staff Reporter

THE UK has signed a 50-year treaty with Australia to support joint submarine programmes which could net £20 billion in exports and safeguard thousands of defence sector jobs, ministers say.

Details of the AUKUS agreement were released as Defence Secretary John Healey joined thousands of British military personnel in Australia as the multi-national Talisman Sabre Exercise began.

Mr Healey said: “AUKUS is one of Britain’s most important defence partnerships, strengthening global security while driving growth at home.

“This historic treaty confirms our AUKUS commitment for the next half century. We are supporting high-skilled, well-paid jobs for tens of thousands of people in both the UK and Australia, delivering on our Plan for Change today and for the generations to come.”



**TREATY:** Defence Secretary John Healey joins Australian military personnel on board HMS Prince of Wales currently taking part in the multi-national Talisman Sabre exercise in Australia.

## 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 47 German aircraft.

### 1951 Wellington hero

WELLINGTON NAVIGATOR Flt Lt Alan Quinton is awarded the posthumous 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 Regiment-operated Rapier missile systems to Bahrain.

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



# RAF, RAAF & US Top Guns take interoperability to new heights

# F-35 pilots 'swap' jets in world first



## Fans hail Lionesses

THE CENTRAL Band of the Royal Air Force took to the stage at Buckingham Palace to provide the musical accompaniment after the victory parade for Euro 2025 winners the Lionesses.

The event saw thousands of fans line The Mall for a procession culminating in a ceremony at the Queen Victoria Memorial.

Directed by Flt Lt Michael



CHAMPS: Lionesses; top, RAF band

Parsons, the 35-personnel RAF Band performed a high-energy set to welcome the Lionesses for the official trophy lift.

Music included football anthems *Three Lions* and *Freed from Desire*, alongside fan-favourite *Sweet Caroline*.

## Cpl's Oder-Neisse line trek

A RAF corporal who was helped by the RAF Benevolent Fund when his young son was ill in hospital has raised funds for the charity after completing the Oder-Neisse challenge.

Marham engineer Cpl John Cross walked and kayaked the 467km distance of the Oder-Neisse line, on the border of Germany and Poland, to mark the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

He said: "The line, drawn after World War II, marked the shifting borders in Europe and is a symbol of the post-war landscape and the sacrifices made for peace."

"By walking this route, I was not only honouring history, but also paying tribute to those who fought, especially the RAF personnel who played a crucial role in securing victory."

"My family and I received a



CHALLENGE: Intrepid Cpl John Cross

lot of support from the RAFBF in 2016. My son was very poorly and had to spend two weeks in Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge. The Fund helped with food and accommodation costs over that time, which we were grateful for.

"This is my second fundraising challenge, and I hope to inspire others to get involved – it is so hugely rewarding."

● Go to: [justgiving.com/page/john-cross-to-donate](https://justgiving.com/page/john-cross-to-donate).

● Continued from front page

RAF Top Gun Sqn Ldr Daniel Goff embedded with the Royal Australian Air Force's 77 Sqn and 75 Sqn and took to the skies in a RAAF F-35 after a day of simulator training as part of the international US-led Interfly programme.

"The crew are treated no differently than any other RAAF F-35 pilot during Talisman Sabre 25," said USAF Reserve Maj Justin 'Spike' Lennon.

"The only way anyone might know it's not an Australian in the RAAF F-35 is the accent on the radio."

"Thanks to the commonality of F-35 variants, aligned training and operational practices between F-35 users, the flying portion is the easiest part."

"Interfly has allowed the USAF to train partner nations on weapons systems they have purchased, as well as conduct exchange assignments."

### Interfly

"However, until now the USAF has never performed international interfly on an ad-hoc basis. This effort is part of a larger plan to normalize F-35 Interfly training with our Allies."

Talisman Sabre is one of the largest military exercises in the world this year and for the first time involves Papua New Guinea.

Spanning Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Queensland, and New South Wales, the Australian-US led biennial training is bigger than ever.

Defence Secretary John Healey said: "The historic bonds between Britain and Australia run deep, and through AUKUS and exercises like Talisman Sabre we are strengthening these ties for the challenges of tomorrow."

"Our commitment to the Indo-Pacific is unwavering, as this huge military exercise demonstrates."

"We will continue to work alongside our closest Allies to maintain the security and stability that underpins global prosperity."

All three branches of the



RED ALERT: US paratroopers prepare to jump from a C-17 Globemaster on Exercise



ALLIED AIRPOWER: UK and US F-35B Lightning IIs on the Prince of Wales Carrier

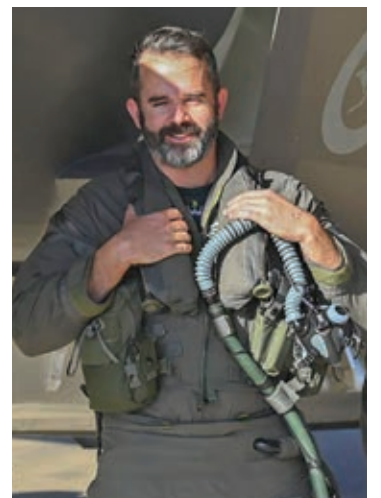
UK Armed Forces are involved, with the RAF also sending Brize Norton-based Voyager aircraft.

As part of the manoeuvres under the cover of darkness more than 350 US Army 11th Airborne Division paratroopers landed in a training area near north-eastern Australia.

The soldiers, part of Task Force 3 Geronimo, departed Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, and demonstrated the capability to deploy combat-ready forces globally on short notice.

US Marines conducted the first mid-range live-fire exercise outside the continental United States, successfully sinking a maritime target with a Standard Missile-6.

Participating nations include Australia, Canada, Fiji, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Netherlands, New



VERSATILE: RAF's Sqn Ldr Daniel Goff flew RAAF F-35B on Talisman Sabre

Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea and Singapore.





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# Island inferno

## Chinooks battle Cyprus wildfires as temperature hits record 45°C



**ISLAND SOS:** Cyprus authorities called in 1310 Flt Chinooks based at Akrotiri to tackle worst wildfires of the century following soaring temperatures

### Simon Mander

**CHINOOKS TACKLED** the biggest wildfire in Cyprus in 50 years which killed two people and devastated 125 sq km of parched woodland.

UK crews dumped 450 tonnes of water onto the blaze, assisted by aircraft from Spain and Jordan, as temperatures soared to 45°C.

Flt Lt Alex Eveson, of 1310 Flight, said: "The fire spanned for miles, filling the sky with thick smoke and intense heat, forcing us to operate in a visually degraded and constantly evolving environment. The size of the fire and the rate at which it spread seemed overwhelming, however with combined efforts, we were able to stop its advance."

Equipped with a giant 'bambi bucket' slung 90ft beneath the aircraft, Chinooks can carry 5,000kg of water – enough to extinguish a fire line a quarter of a mile long in just eight seconds.

1310 Flight, currently manned by Odiham's 18 Sqn personnel, initially fought two small fires on the Western Sovereign Base Area, where Akrotiri and Episkopi Garrison are based.

As temperatures soared island emergency services called in the UK crews to support local fire teams struggling to halt a blaze near the village of Malia, in the Limassol mountain district.



Flt Lt Eveson and his crew were scrambled in 36 minutes and picking up water from a local dam, flying through dense smoke and ash clouds to reach the centre of the blaze.

"Residents were being evacuated by car and coach as emergency services cordoned off areas and redirected traffic," said

Flt Lt Eveson.

Chinooks joined eight AT8 air tractors from the Cyprus Forestry Service, four aircraft from the Cypriot Government, one from the Cypriot Police and one from the Air Force.

Strong westerly winds fanned the flames, which spread towards residential areas near Limassol

– where residents could be seen frantically signalling to passing aircraft.

The UK crews used night vision goggles to work through dusk and were the last to leave the scene.

Engineers at Akrotiri worked through the night to turn the aircraft around, allowing a fresh crew commanded by Flt Lt Tom Williams to launch another sortie to douse fires covering 120km – an area the size of Paris.

They were later called to the mountain village of Pachne, supporting local fire services struggling to reach the site as flames closed in on the densely packed community of 800 people.

The Cypriot High Commissioner in London said: "Your firefighting teams were the first to respond and we deeply appreciate their bravery, professionalism and seamless cooperation with our authorities. It also reflects the best of our bilateral partnership."

Cyprus authorities have confirmed that two people were killed, 14 villages evacuated, 70 houses destroyed and 125 sq km of land burned in the largest wildfire for half a century.

The Chinooks took over firefighting duties from the Pumas when they were retired from 84 Sqn earlier this year.



## Wedgetail return for WWI unit

### Simon Mander

A FORMER World War I ground reconnaissance and attack squadron is to fight again after being stood up with the imminent arrival of the Wedgetail into service.

Beginning as 3 Sqn RNAS, Commander Richard Bell Davies was awarded the Victoria Cross for landing to rescue a comrade under heavy fire in 1915.

On the formation of the RAF, it became 203 Sqn – flying Blenheims during World War II on coastal and anti-shipping patrols.

Post-war it was equipped with Lancasters, Neptune MR2s and Shackletons and moved to RAF Luqa, Malta before disbanding in 1977.

The squadron was reformed in 1996 with Search and Rescue duties until the Sea King retired from service.

In recognition of the size and complexity of enabling both the Poseidon Maritime Patrol Aircraft and Wedgetail Airborne Early Warning and Command and Control capabilities, The King has endorsed the stand-up of 203 Sqn at Lossiemouth from July.



## Chess move

**TYPHOONS SCRAMBLED** more than 20 times to defend Nato airspace on their latest Air Policing beat.

The Operation Chessman jets flew more than 460 hours from 22nd Tactical Air Base Malbork in Poland – the equivalent of circumnavigating the world 10 times.





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# Bully for you

**MENTAL HEALTH** campaigners have recruited the classic 80s TV darts quiz show mascot Bully to help fight depression and loneliness in the Forces.

The *Bullseye* character dropped in at the recent Royal International Air Tattoo to promote the sport and highlight the social benefits of a few games at RAF stations.

Darts has recently been recognised by the Air Force Sports Board and Forces charity campaigner Cpl Zara Durrant is hoping to get darts kit into military sites nationwide as part of the Op Bullseye programme due to launch later this year.

Healing Military Minds founder Hayley Court said: "When you're on a course or on your own a few rounds of darts with others is a great way to socialise, meet people and fight off loneliness."



**BOARDING PARTY:** TV mascot Bully joins Hayley Court (second left) and the darts ambassadors at RIAT

# Flying medics mark decade of Africa ops

**Simon Mander**

**LIFE-SAVING AFRICAN** Angels are celebrating 10 years of RAF aeromedical evacuations on the continent.

Over the past decade, military medics stationed in Kenya have responded to more than 700 emergency missions, providing critical care for personnel and their families.

From road traffic collisions and heat-related illnesses to dramatic cliff rescues and even elephant attacks, the team has faced a wide range of emergencies.

"You don't get many people being chased by elephants and buffalo when you work in your NHS role in the middle of Birmingham or London," said WO Sarah Hayward.

And the service now delivers care that rivals civilian ambulance trusts in the UK.

"When I first came to Kenya, we didn't have the ability to provide blood," said WO Suzi Smith.

"We can now treat casualties with blood products and have improved pain management through stronger medication."



**LIFE SAVERS:** RAF MERT team in action; inset left, African team mark 10th anniversary

Operating in Kenya's austere and unpredictable terrain, each shift brings new challenges.

The Forward Aeromedical Evacuation role in support of British and allied forces across East Africa has been run by RAF personnel since 2015.

It's a vital component of

UK Defence Medical Services, enabling the rapid extraction and in-transit care of injured personnel to medical treatment.

In Kenya, this role supports the British Army Training Unit Kenya.

Over the past 10 years, RAF paramedics, nurses and

aircrew have worked tirelessly to maintain a high-readiness posture, often deploying at short notice to deliver expert care under pressure.

Their work has not only saved lives but also helped train and mentor Kenyan Defence Forces and regional partners.

## In Brief



**PROVOST APPOINTMENT:** WO Alex Tatham

## WO cops it

A **SERIOUS** crime investigator has been appointed the RAF Police's top cop.

Special Investigation Branch stalwart Alex Tatham has been appointed the next Provost Marshal Warrant Officer.

He said: "It is a career-long aspiration and I remain passionate about our profession and fully committed to representing and supporting all our talented people."

He served 11 years on the Special Investigation Branch Northern Region and completed operational deployments in Iraq, Afghanistan, the USA, the United Arab Emirates, the Falkland Islands and Europe.





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In Brief



## Gold strike

THE RAF Museum has been awarded a Gold Award by the MOD for its outstanding support to the Armed Forces community.

The honour is the highest accolade under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

Museum chief executive Maggie Appleton said: "This recognition reflects our long-standing commitment to supporting the Armed Forces community, both within our workforce and through the stories we share with our visitors."

"It is a privilege to play a role in preserving and promoting the legacy of the RAF."



## School's in at Mawgan

HIGH-FLYING YOUNGSTERS got a closer look at Air Force life as they took part in leadership and team-building exercises at RAF St Mawgan.

A dozen Year 10 pupils from across Cornwall took part in the programme to foster confidence, camaraderie and practical skills.

# Game on for X-Box warriors

## UK Defence takes E-Sports challenge



### Simon Mander

**MILITARY DRONE operators and cyber warriors are turning to online gaming to enhance their frontline combat skills**

UK Defence has appointed the British Esports Federation to deliver a new defence tournament through UK Strategic Command to boost the country's warfighting readiness.

Lessons from Ukraine, where military chiefs are producing simulator games to improve hand-eye

coordination, have shown how esports can be used to train drone operators and cyber security specialists.

Initially open to Service personnel, the games will eventually include cadets, veterans, civil servants and anyone working in the defence industry.

Veterans Minister Al Carns said: "Our people must now be as adept with code, cybersecurity and a games controller as they are with traditional combat skills."

The event is being supported by Defence suppliers, including

BAE Systems. Strategic Command deputy head Lt Gen Sir Tom Copinger-Symes said: "For centuries we've used ball games like rugby and football to develop teamwork, hone mental and physical fitness and build resilience. Esports perfectly complement these games."

The move follows the introduction of the Cyber Direct Entry Scheme where those with existing digital skills will see basic training cut from 10 weeks to around one month.

## Chief medic appointed

### Simon Mander

AIRCDRE Darren Ellison has been appointed the Director Defence Healthcare after promotion to the rank of Air Vice-Marshal.

He joined the RAF in 1999 as a medical cadet and has deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Air Cdre Ellison, who takes up the post next year, commanded the Tactical Medical Wing in 2018, and ran the Royal Air Force Centre of Aviation Medicine before becoming the head of Air Force Medical Services last year.

As Director Defence Healthcare he will be responsible for directing, managing and

delivering primary healthcare and dentistry in the UK and on all overseas bases.

Air Cdre Ellison said: "I look forward to working across the Military Commands, to shape and deliver a service that ensures our patients continue to receive the highest standard of safe, effective healthcare they rightly deserve."



**TOP DOC:** Air Cdre Ellison will take up his new role in June 2026



**MADCAP AVIATION** fans are delighting crowds with a cheeky tribute to the RAF's aerobatic aces – by replicating some of the team's famous

moves using wheelbarrows.

The nine-strong Red Barrows are performing at community events across the country executing daring barrel rolls and

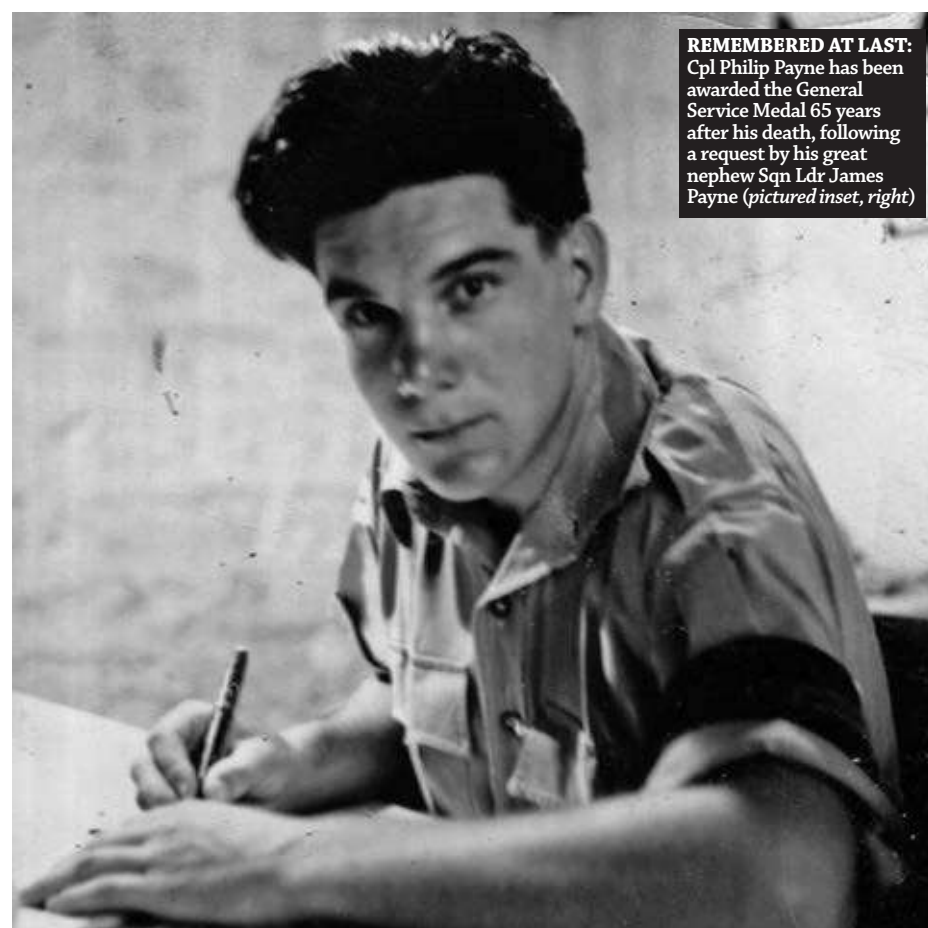
the Reds' famous Diamond Nine and Tornado formations.

A team spokesman said: "We're just like the real thing – only lower and slower"



News

# Aden honour for tragic Cpl



**REMEMBERED AT LAST:** Cpl Philip Payne has been awarded the General Service Medal 65 years after his death, following a request by his great nephew Sqn Ldr James Payne (pictured inset, right)

## Simon Mander

**A FORMER RAF dog handler who died in a freak accident in Aden has been awarded a medal 65 years after his body was found.**

Acting Corporal Philip Gerald Payne was killed after being electrocuted by a broken overhead power line and was buried at the colony's Maala British Services Cemetery in 1960.

His service was never acknowledged until his great nephew, Sqn Ldr James Buzz Payne, began researching his family's history and requested the posthumous General Service honour.

He said: "It is a real joy to have Great Uncle Philip's service recognised with his General Service Medal.

"There has been a lot of military service within my family's history including Philip's brother Eric, my grandfather, who was a Royal Navy stoker and served onboard the aircraft carrier HMS Centaur.

"I even have my great-grandfather's War Medal and cap badge. With Philip's GSM, my dad's South Atlantic Campaign and LSGD medals, and my own awards, which is four generations of medals in the family"



Philip Gerald Payne was born in September 1939 and joined the RAF Police at Nether Avon. He was deployed to Malta's Maintenance Base Safi, then transferred to Steamer Point in Aden, Yemen.

By March 1959, he was serving with his police dog Rockie at 114 Maintenance Unit, which supplied RAF, Army and Navy units throughout the region.

Life in Aden was tough, with extreme heat reaching 55°C, limited rainfall except for occasional flooding, and few recreational facilities.

The General Service Medal 1918-62 was awarded to members of the British Armed Forces for service on the Arabian Peninsula, where A/Cpl Payne was stationed at the time of his death.

Provost Marshal Gp Capt Samantha Bunn presented the GSM to Sqn Ldr Payne at a ceremony at Halton.

She said: "Cpl Payne was very clearly an extremely dedicated RAF Police Dog Handler who tragically lost his life whilst conducting operational activity on the Arab Peninsula, a particularly challenging environment."

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Royal Air Force

# In Concert

**Palace Theatre, Newark**

Band of the Royal Air Force College

7.30pm Friday 19 September 2025

**Cast, Doncaster**

Band of the Royal Air Force College

3pm Sunday 21 September 2025

**Epsom Playhouse**

Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment

7.30pm Friday 3 October 2025

**Terry O'Toole Theatre, Lincoln**

Royal Air Force Swing Wing

7.30pm Friday 17 October 2025

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# Türkiye eyes Typhoon to lift NATO firepower

Simon Mander

A MULTI-BILLION pound deal to sell Typhoon fighters to Türkiye is closer following the signing of a new agreement.

Defence Ministers of both countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding agreeing that a future Eurofighter exports deal would strengthen Ankara's advanced combat capabilities.

Talks will now continue over the coming weeks to secure the first export order the UK has secured for aircraft since 2017.

Defence Secretary John Healey said: "This agreement is a big step towards Türkiye buying UK Typhoon fighter jets."

"Equipping Türkiye with Typhoons would strengthen Nato's collective defence and boost both our countries' industrial bases by securing thousands of skilled jobs across the UK for years to come."

It comes as Mr Healey makes the drive for deals a high priority with the MOD taking on responsibility for defence exports from the Department for Business and Trade.

Latest statistics show UK defence exports were valued at £14.5 billion in just a 12-month period.



The Typhoon workshare agreement would see more than a third of each aircraft manufactured in the UK at BAE Systems' Warton site in Lancashire and would include radars from Edinburgh and engines from Bristol.

BAE Systems Chief Executive Charles Woodburn said: "This Memorandum of Understanding underscores the importance of long-standing defence cooperation through Nato and the critical role Typhoon plays in security and defence in Europe

and the Middle East.

"The UK continues to invest in its own world-class Typhoon fleet, which will remain the backbone of the UK's air defence until at least the 2040s, with the RAF's existing fighters being upgraded over the next 15 years."

## Bulletin



**HOME GROWN:** Brize families can cultivate their own plants at the new conservation garden

## Brize digs in

A NEW conservation garden has been opened at RAF Brize Norton.

The space where the children can plant their own seeds and bulbs features raised beds, a mud kitchen, bug hotel, bird boxes, and chalkboards built by volunteers using reclaimed and repurposed materials.

Station Commander Gp Capt Louise Henton opened the space at the Millennium Amenities Centre, which has revitalised a once-disused outdoor area, for the Airplay Youth Club.

The project was made possible by personnel and staff from JADTEU, Thales, Serco, Vinci and the grounds maintenance team who gave materials, tools and expertise, from bespoke benches and feeders to wood chippings and construction support.

# Balloon goes up on combat test

Simon Mander

HIGH-ALTITUDE BALLOONS that can soar higher than most military aircraft are being tested to conduct intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance missions.

Defence is developing the uncrewed inflatables that can travel more than 2,000 nautical miles and operate between 60,000 and 80,000 feet, double that of a commercial aircraft.

In future, the balloons could support operations delivering reliable communication and provide fast internet connection to disaster zones or remote areas, weather forecasting and climate research.

With weather sensors weighing as little as a European robin, the test vehicles can operate continuously for more than five days operated by a single person, a spokesman said.

Defence Procurement



Minister Maria Eagle said: "Stratospheric technology like this could transform how we operate in complex environments, keeping our people safer and better informed than ever before."

The trials took place in South Dakota, USA, earlier this year as part of Project Aether, an initiative supported by the Ministry of Defence's procurement body, Defence Equipment & Support.

Head of UK Defence Innovation James Gavin said: "The UK-developed technology provides continuous Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance capability whilst maintaining remarkably low operating costs."

UK Defence is also exploring using the stratosphere with vehicles capable of carrying higher payloads for missions lasting between six months to a year.

# Battling Harriet's a super-trooper

Staff Reporter

BATTLING FIVE-YEAR-OLD Harriet Smith has been presented with a charity award for coping with her chronic autoimmune disorder while dad Sqn Ldr Chris is deployed in the Gulf with the RAF's 83 Expeditionary Air Group.

She picked up the Little Troopers award as mum Malika and younger brother George, two, look forward to Dad's return later this summer.

She said: "I miss Daddy a lot but I know he's being very brave too. I really love my medal."

Malika, a freelance photographer, added: "Harriet's diagnosis has meant big changes. She experiences chronic fatigue, headaches and sudden tiredness but she's taken everything in her stride."

"She understands the importance of keeping her body safe, and she's remained positive, kind and sensible throughout it all."

Little Troopers is a UK charity that supports children with parents serving in the British Armed Forces. The award celebrates youngsters who face the unique challenges of military life.



**COURAGE:** Harriet Smith with her Little Trooper of the Month award. Above, with dad Chris, mum Malika and younger brother George



## Feature

## Yeomen Warders



YW ANDY HARRIS



YW EMMA ROUSELL



YW PAUL LANGLEY



YW LISA GARLAND

# Towe



**'WHEN I GROW UP':** The two-year-old Garry McCormick dreamed of being a Beefeater after visiting the Tower in 1968

## The RAF veterans flying the flag for the UK at one of the world's most popular tourist attractions

**S**OME CHILDREN dream of growing up to be fast jets pilots, train drivers, astronauts or pop stars, but when he was very young Garry McCormick set his heart on becoming a Yeoman Warder ('Beefeater') at the Tower of London.

Now the former Gunner, who served in the RAF Regiment for 24 years, followed by 15 years as a police officer, is living the dream. For the past two and a half years he has been one of the 35-strong Yeoman Body who live and work at the legendary fortress.

The ex-Flight Sergeant served all over the world including in the Falkland Islands, Sierra Leone, Iraq, Kuwait and Belize. He is currently mentor to YW Andy Harris, former Station Warrant Officer at Northolt, who joined the eight-strong contingent of RAF veterans who are Yeoman Warders in May.

Garry (*inset below*) said: "I mentor Andy on all aspects of the job, including the 10,000-word history of the tower. It's my responsibility over the next six months to make sure he is word perfect."

He added: "I always wanted to be a Yeoman Warder, since I was a little boy. I carry a picture in my notebook of me aged two with two YWs at the Tower in 1968."

### The Keys

"I am also an archivist for the history of the Yeoman Body and I'm the property manager for The Keys, the Yeoman Warders' club, for the Tower residents."

"It's a full-on job, I love it. I live here with my wife and it's great for when my grandchildren come to visit. It's really quite surreal living here, it's basically a walled village, like in medieval times. It's quite unique – our front garden is Tower Green."

Andy, a former armourer with over 36 years' service, explained: "The YW role gives us that connection to the military-style way of life and the Monarch, and all the ceremony we as veterans have got used to. It feels like a home from home."

The YWs all live at the Tower with their families and have their own facilities within its walls, including a church and a pub.

Andy added: "This is one of the biggest tourist attractions in the world and after 5.30pm when the visitors

have left, it changes to a community and we go back to living our lives. It's similar in a way to having lived on RAF stations, that community lifestyle, and with that comes tolerance and integration."

As the newest YW, he is concentrating on learning what's called 'the London story' about the Tower, full of facts and figures that he has to know by heart.

Meeting people is one of his favourite parts of the role. He said: "It's lovely to talk to the public and hear where in the world they have come from. We pose for photos – that's part of the job – and answer lots of questions. People are particularly interested in Anne Boleyn and children ask about ghosts and why we're called Beefeaters."

"We are also responsible for a level of security and safety for our guests, making sure they have a great visit and inspiring them to come back."

Beefeaters, by the way, are thought to have been given their nickname because they originally got generous meat rations as one of their job perks.

The first ex-RAF YW was appointed in 1925 and the first female YW in 2007. Yeoman Warders were originally part of the Yeoman of the Guard, the Monarch's personal bodyguard, with the role traditionally filled by men.

To qualify, applicants must have served for at least 22 years in the Armed Forces, hold the Long Service and Good Conduct medal and have reached the rank of Warrant Officer or equivalent.

Of today's five female YWs, three are RAF veterans. YW Emma Rousell, who joined four years ago, was the first from the Air Force. The former WO, a chef, served for 32 years including in Scotland, Cyprus, the Falkland Islands and Northern Ireland.

### Vacancies

She said: "I'd only visited the Tower once before I applied for the job, I came to see the Ceremony of the Keys. It was amazing, I loved it. I knew someone who worked here and he told me there were some vacancies. I thought it sounded really interesting but I didn't think I would get the job. I was chosen from about 80 applicants, which

was pretty awesome."

Legend has it that the kingdom and the Tower of London will fall if its resident ravens ever leave the fortress.

"I live on Tower Green and about 2 o'clock one morning I was woken up by a ruckus – a fox and Jubilee, one of the ravens, were in a stand-off. I dived outside and had to chase the fox off. Jubilee survived and I saved the monarchy," Emma laughed.

Barry Stringer became a YW six years ago after 33 years as an RAF musician, including the post of Band Sergeant for

the Central Band of the RAF.

He said: "A Yeoman Warder is an iconic position and having the opportunity to live in a royal palace and fortress with my family is wonderful. Sharing it with them is quite extraordinary. I'm very, very proud to call myself a Yeoman Warder – in 39 years of serving the monarch this position is the highlight of that career. It's the highest honour."

Ex-Gunner Thomas "Tam" Reilly became the 414th Yeoman Warder of the Tower in 2022. The former Honington Training Assurance





# r power



YW BARRY STRINGER



YW TAM REILLY

YWs [all but one of whom are still in the role] is incredible. It's a really nice community we have here, it's a nice place to work. I never go home from work thinking 'that was a rubbish day' and not a lot of people can say that."

Tracey Machin joined the Tower in 2022 after 23 years in The Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service. The former WO was deployed numerous times to Afghanistan, serving at Bastion, Kandahar and Kabul airbases.

## Pandemic

She explained: "While on maternity leave and preparing to leave the RAF, I was watching a TV show *Inside The Tower* and as I looked down at my baby boy I imagined the amazing opportunity to offer him the chance to grow up living in a castle.... and the seed was sown. I prepared to leave the RAF in March 2020, which collided catastrophically with the Covid pandemic, so I took a job as a sister in urgent care for the NHS in Lincoln. In 2022 I had an email from Historic Royal Palaces about an available position and the rest is history."

Tracey added: "From the very beginning I knew I wanted to work with the ravens. I had to wait for a position to come up as only five of the YW have the honour to be on the team. We are headed up by the Ravenmaster and are all trained falconers which allows us to properly care for them."

"I do everything from cleaning cages, feeding and putting them to bed and anything and everything else the ravens might require in between, while also still completing

all my YW daily duties, so it's a busy role. Some days they are very well behaved but frequently I intervene to stop them stealing children's snacks.

"Recently we have had a bit of a love triangle with three of the ravens – it's a bit like *Love Island*! Georgie, originally paired with Jubilee, has switched her affections to the emerging alpha male – Harris. They spend each day together sitting on the steps of The White Tower, posing for pictures and kissing. Jubilee is not happy with this and takes himself off to the far North East corner of the Tower. He sits on a specially made perch at The Martin Tower, where he sulks so he doesn't have to watch the blossoming romance. We give him the odd extra mouse to cheer him up."

## Queen Camilla

She added: "The stand-out reason for coming to the Tower was the opportunities that living here would provide for my five-year-old son. He was selected to place the final ceramic poppy in the ground with Queen Camilla in May for the display to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE Day. Every day he tells me he loves living in the castle and it makes me so proud of all of the amazing things that he gets to do."

● Go to: [hrp.org.uk.tower-of-london/](http://hrp.org.uk.tower-of-london/) for more details.

and Training Support Warrant Officer served for 35 years.

He said: "I have a keen interest in history, especially military history. I'm also an archivist for the YWs. It's a huge prestige to have this job. It's a great honour and so highly regarded in the military. It's the cherry on top of the cherry. I love doing tours – you get a great reaction from people."

Chief Yeoman Warder Paul Langley



YW TRACEY MACHIN

joined the Yeoman Body in 2021, after 34 years in the RAF Regiment, serving in Cyprus, Iraq and Afghanistan. His final posting was SWO at RAF Leeming.

Paul said: "It has always been a dream of mine to be part of the Yeoman Body, but to now take up this iconic role is even more special. It's a real honour."

"The YWs are from different Services and this is like a Tri-Service unit. I live here

with my wife, who is a social worker in London. It's a fantastic place to live, and wonderful to be a custodian of the nation's history."

Former FS Lisa Garland has been a YW for two years after 22 years in the RAF as an Air Traffic Controller, followed by 10 years in civvy street.

"I applied to be a Yeoman Warder because I thought it would be exciting," she said. "When you learn about the Yeoman Body, who wouldn't want to be part of it and part of the Tower history?"

"To be one of just six female



RAVEN: Tower 'protector'



# Government climbdown on death benefits is welcomed

THE FORCES Pension Society is pleased to announce that, following its submission to HM Treasury in January this year, the Government has accepted that its planned policy would "create inconsistencies with death in service benefits paid in other ways, particularly payments of lump sums from a non-pension group life policy held in trust".

The Government's proposal had been that death in service lump sum payments for service personnel who die in service and who are not married or in a civil partnership should be liable to Inheritance Tax.

The Society in its submission, argued that this proposal would have been at odds with existing policy and was certainly not within the spirit of the Armed Forces Covenant.

**Maj Gen Neil Marshall, CEO of the Forces Pension Society commented:** "I'm very pleased the Government has used the consultation process constructively and agrees with the concerns we raised.

## Inheritance tax plan is scrapped following consultation process




**This welcome decision will ensure all Armed Forces Pension Scheme Death in Service benefits will now be out of scope**


**of Inheritance Tax, irrespective of the Service Persons' marital status.**

**"This is in line with the Armed Forces Covenant whereby those who served, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services."**

*\*The Forces Pension Society is an independent, not-for-profit organisation that provides pension guidance to those serving and retired, across all three services, and represents the pension interests of the whole military community. Last year, the Society's expert Pensions Consultants dealt with almost 30,000 pension enquiries. Membership of the Society is growing and numbers more than 66,000. For more information, visit [forcespensionsociety.org](http://forcespensionsociety.org)*








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The official voice of the Royal Air Force



# CDS welcome for rookies



THE LATEST class of Royal Air Force rookies took to the famous parade square at Cranwell College for the formal review, carried out by Chief of the Defence Staff Admiral Sir Tony Radakin.

Speaking at one of his last formal events before handing over the post to current Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton, he said: "Today's graduates have made an extraordinary commitment to

serve their nation.

"Their task now is to apply the Royal Air Force's tradition of courage, innovation and excellence to a more contested world. I have absolute faith in them. An amazing career awaits."

The Band of the Royal Air Force College provided the musical accompaniment, and a spectacular flypast was provided by two Hurricanes from the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight.



SALUTE: Outgoing CDS Admiral Sir Tony Radakin with new recruits

PHOTOS: ANDREW WHEELER

## Families' Day proves a thrilling way to say Lanc you very much!

CROWDS FLOCKED to a Lincolnshire airbase to watch the Red Arrows, Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and the Typhoon display team.

Coningsby's Families' Day issued around 10,000 tickets for its fairground attractions, classic vehicles, artisan food

stalls, historical re-enactors and stunning airshows.

Project officer Sqn Ldr Kat Jones said: "It's a big project for a good reason. Our aim is to make sure that we say thank you to as many of our personnel and their families as possible, and to give them a memorable and fun day."

Station Commander Gp Capt Paul O'Grady said: "You only get success like

this through careful planning, lots of hard work and dedication, and you could tell from the cheerful atmosphere, the conversation, the laughter across the entire site that everybody who came had a great time."



ROAR-LY GOOD FUN: Crowds were treated to flypast by Reds and BBMF Lancaster as well as stalls and re-enactors, right PHOTOS: AS1 JOSH WHITING, SGT NICHOLAS EGAN & AS1 MOHARRAM





# STONYHURST

AGES 3-18

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# Surviving Wellington sea plunge made Roy Goldfish Club member

## Rear gunner Flt Sgt Woodgate dies aged 104

**FLT SGT Roy Woodgate, who has died aged 104, was the rear gunner of a Wellington bomber that crashed in the Mediterranean and he spent time in a dinghy before being rescued.**

He enlisted in the RAF in 1941 and trained as a wireless operator/air gunner. He flew to India where he joined 36 Sqn, recently re-equipped with the Wellington for anti-submarine duties off Madras. With little activity, the squadron moved to Algeria to operate in the Mediterranean, where he flew on several seven-hour patrols searching for surfaced U-boats.

On the night of November 2, 1943, Woodgate and his crew took off in their 36 Sqn Wellington from Tafraoui, near Oran in Algeria, to carry out an anti-submarine patrol. During the pre-flight briefing, the crew were told that there was no Allied shipping in their search area.

Flying at 1,000 feet, the crew carried out a search when Woodgate, who was working the radar, detected a blip on the screen. His pilot prepared to attack and Woodgate returned to his gun turret. As the bomber homed in on the target, Woodgate sensed that they were too low and called the pilot to climb. A second attack was set up and the depth charges were primed as the powerful Leigh Light searchlight carried under the wing was lowered and switched on to illuminate the target.

On this run, the Wellington was again too low and hit the sea and broke up. Woodgate was able to scramble clear from his rear turret but was badly cut as he resurfaced. He found two of the crew clinging to the upturned

dinghy. Two others were missing. The primed depth charges exploded as the bomber sank and 30 minutes later a pinnacle came alongside and picked up the oil covered survivors to take them to the corvette HMS Anemone.

When told how "lucky" he was that Anemone was so close to the scene of the ditching, he replied, "Not really. If she hadn't been there, we'd never have crashed in the first place".

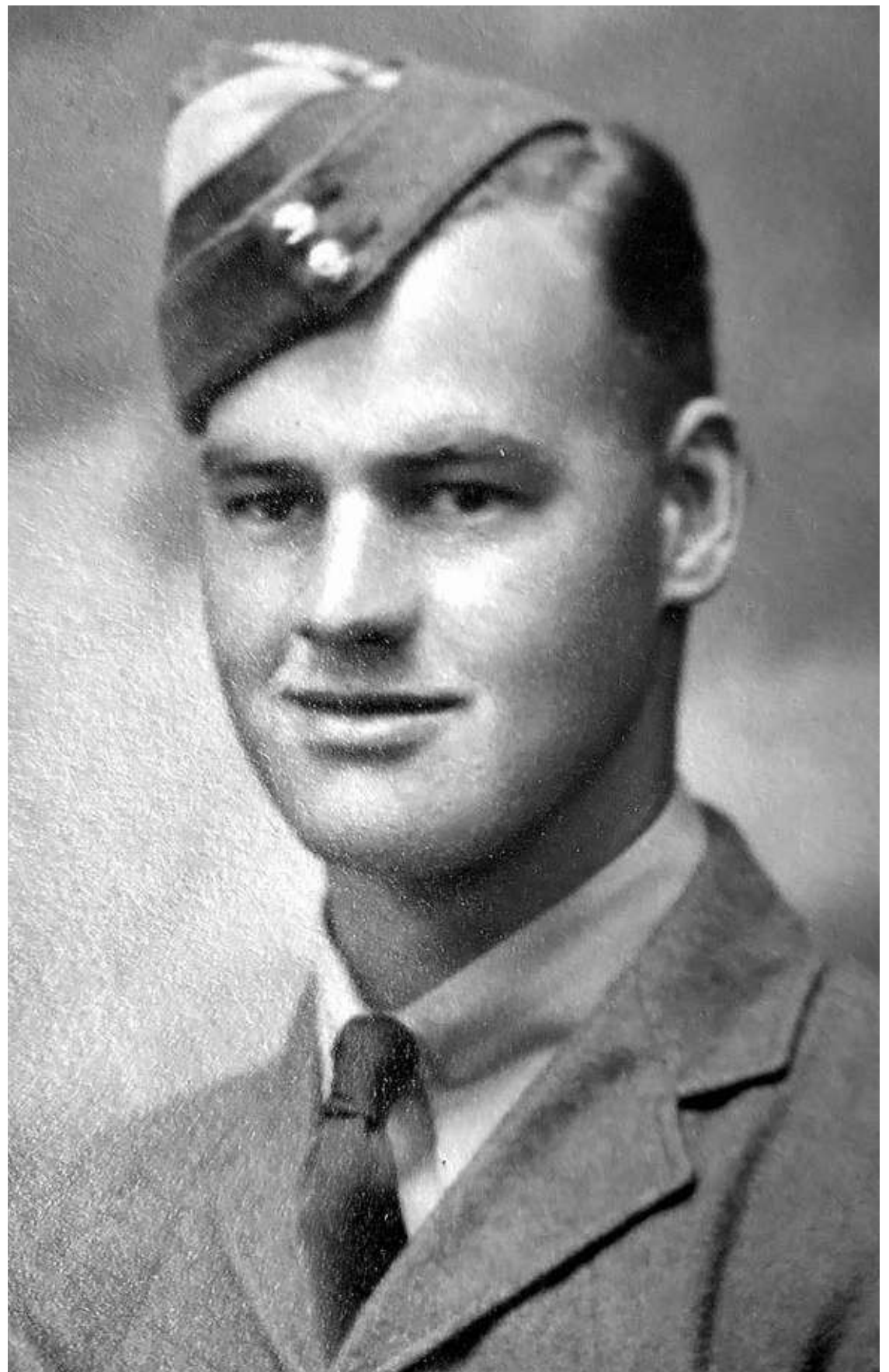
His ditching gave him membership of the exclusive 'Goldfish Club' – founded in 1942 for those who owed their lives to inflatable survival equipment.

Woodgate suffered from a spinal concussion and was admitted to a US hospital, where he remained for four weeks until he regained the use of his legs. His severe cuts became gangrenous, and he was admitted to a British hospital where he learnt that his brother, serving in the Royal Sussex Regiment, had been killed in action in Italy.

He returned to Britain via Gibraltar to complete his recovery, but his flying days were over, and he was re-mustered as a ground radar operator spending a year at the RAF early warning radar site at Beer Head in Devon.

He was demobilised in 1946 and worked for Nicol Toys before re-enlisting into the marine branch of the RAF in 1955, when he served on HMRAFV Bridport, a former Royal Navy minesweeper which had been modified for the air-sea rescue role. He left the RAF three years later to return to Sussex.

When he turned 100, he was thrilled to receive his birthday card from Her Majesty The Queen and a Certificate of Congratulations from the RAF.







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**PHOTOS:** AS1  
JODIE COSBY  
& CPL GARETH  
McGARVIE

# Atlas helps fight terror and keeps the RAF mobile

## Staff Reporter

The Gulf

**A400M ATLAS transport aircraft from the Air Mobility Force are supplying UK counter-terror operations in the Middle East with regular flights across the region carrying essential kit and personnel.**

Based at Akrotiri in Cyprus transport crews have been supporting the American-led mission against the Daesh terror group for the last decade.

As the RAF's frontline combat pilots and UAV operators target terror from the skies over Iraq and Syria, the Mobility Force is also delivering vital supplies to Royal Navy vessels combating the multi-billion pound international drugs trafficking trade and piracy on Operation Kipion.

Supported by a Voyager tanker, the Brize Atlas crews are also on standby to support all UK military bases across the region.

RAF News joined a routine sortie from Cyprus as the A400M is loaded with seven pallets of cargo

by a combined team of movers from Akrotiri's Joint Movements Squadron and some deployed personnel from the UK Mobile Air Movements Squadron, normally based at Brize Norton.

One Atlas pilot said: "This is a bread and butter job for us, it keeps everything else going and is therefore a very important role, but it is just one of the many tasks that we do on the squadron."

Also on board the aircraft for its trip around the region is a small Air Mobility Protection Team drawn from the RAF Police and the RAF Regiment.

## Movers

Arriving at 902 Expeditionary Air Wing based in Oman, some of the freight is unloaded and other pallets from a Royal Marine Exercise are loaded for despatch to the UK by a combined team of deployed Movers in Oman and others from UKMAMS.

After a short flight to 906 EAW at Al Minhad Air Base in Dubai, further unloading and loading is carried out on an overnight stop. The following day

the A400M departs for Saudi Arabia for the final delivery of freight and a return to RAF Akrotiri.

The Air Mobility Force Detachment commander in the region, Sqn Leader Katie Hermolle, said: "These flights carried out by the A400M are an essential element of the work of the RAF's deployed Air Mobility Force."

"The flights demonstrate the delivery of Tactical Military Air Transport, which is just one of the ways by which AMF provides a wide range of logistical and mission-enabling capabilities across the globe for Defence."

The recent MITS flight was flown by a mixed crew drawn from Brize Norton's 30 and LXX Sqs, with personnel usually deploying for four weeks to Cyprus and expecting to do several deployments per year.

This is in addition to all of the other global activities such as providing the personnel for the ongoing deployment in the Falkland Islands, supporting world-wide exercises and other operations and taking part in the exercises that the AMF are involved in each year.





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# Straight-six a rare beast



**THIS WEEK** I'm testing Mazda's new seven-seater flagship SUV, the CX-80, and it certainly makes a statement.

Mazda has, figuratively, put two fingers up to the green lobby and launched a straight-six, diesel. Bold, genius, brilliant, a real car!

It's big, smooth and powerful, with epic grunt for towing, or climbing over mountains, everything a big SUV should be. It's essentially a long-wheelbase version of Mazda's CX-60 and it feels like a big beast.

The larger footprint increases passenger space by a noticeable amount, so the cabin feels vast, and it looks like it means business from the outside.

## Exterior

Let's put the size into context here. To your average Parisian, it's gargantuan. In America, it's marketed as a 'mid-sized crossover', a little runabout, and here, it's a full-fat SUV, akin to the Volvo XC90, the Audi Q7, or the Land Rover Discovery.

The styling is subtle, yet imposing. The gaping front grille has a Lincoln-esque feel, while the long nose and beefy front arches give it real on-road presence. This is a Mazda that has the ability to be a contender in the premium SUV market. It's likely to be appealing too, because it's tens of thousands of pounds cheaper than its premium seven-seat rivals.



## Interior

The CX-80 provides a comfortable environment for long journeys. It has a very Scandinavian-feel; light wood, posh interior, complemented by soft leather upholstery. There's also plenty of fancy tech on top spec cars to keep you comfy.

The ventilated/heated seats are a welcome addition and Mazda's tactile control layout is quick to learn and easy to get along with. There's also a useful bank of buttons on the dashboard controlling the aircon.

The big 12.3 inch screen in the middle of the dash isn't touch operated, either, relying on a good old-fashioned rotary controller. For the modern generation who love to poke and prod at touchscreen menus, it's a bit alien,



but you soon get used to it and it's far more precise when you do. Alternatively, there's voice control, if you prefer talking to the car.

The interior quality is impressive, with plenty of high-quality materials. The plastics do get a bit cheap below the waist, these are hard-wearing and in-keeping with the utility needs of a family 4x4.

The front seats are suitably plush and the interior is versatile, thanks to a sliding second row, or even the option of captain's chairs.

## On The Road

The CX-80 is exactly what you'd expect from a Sports Utility Vehicle, especially in the straight-six version. With 251bhp, this 3.3-litre six-cylinder engine pulls like a train, even when towing

## Pros

- Classy, versatile, spacious interior
- Plenty of user-friendly tech as standard
- Smooth and refined diesel engine, with bags of grunt

## Cons

- Diesel has higher running costs
- Softer-riding rivals around

## Verdict

If you want an SUV that has style and charisma, for an affordable outlay, the CX-80

## Mazda CX-80

should be on your test-drive list. The interior is classy and well laid-out, with a lot of easy-to-use tech and a versatile seating system. The straight-six diesel engine sounds great and is a match for more expensive rivals in the class. Alternatively, the plug-in hybrid makes a cost-effective alternative if you spend most of your time around town, or you're choosing a company car.

heavy trailers. 0-62mph takes 8.4 seconds, which feels rapid enough in a beast of this size, and it will return 48.7mpg, if official figures are to be believed.

I didn't achieve that, but then I rarely get near to official figures, usually due to having an incredibly heavy right foot.

On a major upside, when you're tearing through the mountains, the straight-six diesel is as smooth and flexible as you could want, complemented by a fast-changing auto gearbox. The big diesel growl from under the bonnet is also rather satisfying.

The ride will feel a little firm for some, but agility comes at a cost. Given its size, it's fairly flat through the bends and is surprisingly composed. Don't get me wrong, this is a big 4x4, so

the steering isn't the quickest and there's no real feedback through the wheel, but it's a relaxing wagon for long-haul journeys.

Those of you interested in hauling boats, or other trailer type loads, will be pleased to hear that the CX-80 is rated at 2,500kg for towing. Higher-spec cars also come with fancy tech to make your towing run more smoothly.

If economy is your focus, then there is a PHEV version available that is quicker than the straight-six. This combines a 2.5-litre, four-cylinder petrol engine with an electric motor and a 17.8kWh battery. 323Bhp and 0-62mph in 6.8 seconds. It doesn't have the straight-six's charm and charisma, especially in the gearbox department, but it could be worth a look.



## ARCHERY

# N-arrows victory for Sgt

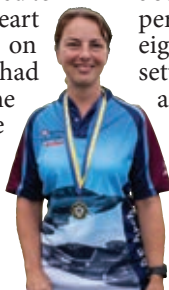
## Daniel Abrahams

WITH NERVES of steel Service archer Sgt Ellie Spinks claimed her first-ever National Tour stage win in a nail-biting finale in Barnsley.

Representing the RAF Archery Association, Spinks emerged victorious in Stage 5 of the six-stage national event, which culminates in September and attracts the nation's top archers.

The aviator, *inset below*, battled tough opponents throughout the day of competition, none more so than in the final where she faced and beat Anastasia Wilson, the reigning queen of UK barebow archery, who tops both the UK National Rankings and the National Tour standings.

Spinks said: "Drawing on all my mental mastery, I tried to calm my nerves, my heart rate, and concentrate on the job in hand. All I had to do was keep doing the same thing I had in the previous two matches, and I might, just might, have a chance at beating Anastasia Wilson."



## Cool head and steady nerves win the day for Waddington's Spinks



**BATTLE:** Ellie, right, and Wilson

Qualifying with an impressive 568, just three points shy of her personal best, Spinks placed eighth in the day's rankings, setting the stage for a challenging afternoon of head-to-head knockout matches.

In the opening contest she faced the ninth seed in a closely contested battle before facing the tournament's top seed, where she delivered

a flawless performance, winning in three straight sets and securing her place in the quarter-finals. Another 6-3 victory set her up for the gold medal match against Wilson.

Waddington-based Spinks said: "It was only after this match finished that it dawned on me that I was into my first-ever National Tour final match."

The match began with a tense first end, resulting in a 1-1 draw. Wilson then won the next two ends to lead 5-1.

With just one more point needed for Wilson to secure victory, Sgt Spinks produced a stunning display of skill, shooting an incredible 29 out of 30 in the fourth end, narrowing the gap to 3-5. The fifth end saw her maintain her momentum, scoring 27 to force a 5-5 tie and



**GOLDEN GIRL:** Ellie with her winning arrow from the shoot-out

send the match into a one-arrow shoot-off.

The shoot-off was a moment of high drama. Both archers stepped up to the line, knowing

that the closest arrow to the centre would decide the winner, with the aviator taking the glory.

● Follow RAF Archery on Instagram @rafarchery.

## DARTS

# Bully for you, Daz

## Army's Cpl McMahon wins selection to represent UKAF in darts Pentathlon

ALL EYES were on RAF Leeming as the chance to win selection for the UKAF darts team saw the Service's best do battle at the station's oche.

The competition pitted the top players from each Service against each other, with the RAF represented by AS1 Aaron Tibbs, WO Duncan Ayre, FS Glenn

West and AS2 Kieran Styles.

The event went the way of the Army's Cpl Darren McMahon after a round robin day of action. He will now represent UK Armed Forces in external competition the British Darts Pentathlon, run by the England Darts Organisation.

RAF Darts Liaison Cpl Zara Warhurst said: "The whole event was excellent, with a very high standard of darts. All of the players were exceptional. The banter was great, the games were great. It was an extremely competitive event with a superb atmosphere."

"A few tears were shed by the winner, which is what all of this is about after all the long hours of practice."

The 12 players were split into two groups of six, with two personnel from each Service in each group. They



**ON TARGET:** Winner Cpl Darren McMahon (bottom right) with fellow Services darts players and mascot Bully at RAF Leeming

then played a round robin series of 501 games.

The round robin part was first to 3 legs, with the top four from each group through to the knockout stage.

Tibbs, Ayre and West all managed to get through the opening rounds, before exiting the event in the quarter-finals.

McMahon beat fellow Army player L/Cpl Jack Fuller in the final.

Warhurst added: "This was a magnificent advert for Service darts, and a great way to get our UKAF player for the season, although I did receive plenty of banter about an aviator not making the cut, but that will only inspire us more for next year."

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## MARTIAL ARTS

SPARRING:  
Martial artists

# Digging in for the Inter-Services with Digby training camp

**THE MARTIAL arts association prepared for the Inter-Services championships with a training camp at RAF Digby.**

The karate players concentrated on technique and drills work, with resistance bands and heavy bags for conditioning. Kata practice featured guest instructors England team coach Gee Lawson and Team Rankin head coach Mike Rankin.

Inters team member Cpl Ryan Williams said: "It was a very successful training camp, thank you to all our instructors for providing great insights."

"I'm feeling confident we can retain the team trophy this year and get some good results."

Taekwondo drilled it stars with pad work, sparring, stamina and conditioning training and featured two guest instructors: fifth dan black belt Mark Fitton and third dan Kris Roscoe.

TKD team captain Cpl Richard Pope said: "Our training consisted of patterns and sparring. Each movement was broken down to enable practitioners to isolate weak points and develop match-winning tactics and techniques. Together I believe we represent a serious and dangerous opposition to the other services. Train hard, fight easy."

Drilling various techniques in both gi and no gi was how the Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) team

worked its training game plan, with a number of guest coaches including Lee Bown, head coach at Amber Valley MMA; Kyle Sweet, judo black belt from Amber Valley MMA; and Paul Lukowski, head coach Nottingham MMA.

Team captain Chf Tech DJ Jackson said: "I believe the team looked sharp across the whole week. Extra thanks to the instructors that dedicated their time and knowledge to the development of the team. Will it be enough? We certainly hope so."

German Air Force (Luftwaffe) athletes Hauptfeldwebel Robin Schwab and Sgt Pete Kanting joined the team during the week.

RAF MAA spokesperson Cpl Eleanor Walvin said: "The Bundeswehr does not have the same sporting opportunities as the British Forces so this was an opportunity to improve relations and to hopefully return the favour and host a training camp in Germany in the future."

Purple belt and IBJJF Master Gold Medallist Schwab said: "The week was a great opportunity to learn from each other and start a partnership in a martial arts environment. I'm looking forward to the next opportunity to train together in Germany."

This year's Inter-Services, held at HMS Nelson and Temeraire, Portsmouth, marks the 10th anniversary of BJJ being added to the championships.

● Follow RAF Martial Arts @rafmartialarts on Instagram.

## RUGBY UNION

Event returns after six years

# Aki 10s is back and ladies join the party



PLATE WINNERS: Marham, in blue, took home some silverware after bruising encounters

## Daniel Abrahams

**THE RETURN of the Akrotiri 10s rugby saw the Cyprus station end its six-year wait without the four-day event thanks to Chf Tech Matt Clarke.**

The Project Officer for the tournament said: "I don't think we can compare to previous years; it is just good to have it back. I just didn't like the thought of being at Aki for five years and the event not being held."

The Aki 10s, which started in the 1980s, halted in 2019 due to Covid and Operations, with this year's event not only seeing the long-awaited return, but also the first-ever staging of a women's event, with Royal Artillery Ladies winning out.

1PWRR triumphed in the men's event, which featured 10 teams. Marham took the plate and Akrotiri the bowl.

Clarke has played in all categories of RAF rugby from U21s to Senior and Veteran and also donned the shirt for UKAF.

He added: "Station rugby union is struggling, things like the Aki 10s, the Clayton Cup for rugby league and other big events are the only hope for station rugby of both codes."

"Many on the station had never heard of the Aki 10s, so to get them to see what it's all about was great."

"To get four women's teams playing for the first time was the real line in the sand. We have already got teams getting ready for next year's event, too. Everything is ready for 2026. I am delighted and proud to be the person who brought it back and the Station OIC has already said it will be on."

"It was vital as somebody once did this for me and I just turned up and played. So without someone organising things, in this case me, and the teams doing the hard yards with events like this, Service rugby can't keep progressing."





Sport

CRICKET

# Skipper is tournament's best but it's not enough

## Army take the spoils in IS

Daniel Abrahams

A TOUGH 100-run defeat ended the RAF Women cricketers' dreams of Inter-Services glory, as they fell to a rampant Army side in Portsmouth.

The aviators began the tournament with a 10-wicket defeat of hosts the Royal Navy, with Sgt Lucy Farmer producing a scintillating spell with the ball taking 5 wickets for 5 runs in 4.5 overs, the second-best bowling figures for a RAF woman.

She was awarded player of the match.

With the Army winning the second clash against the Navy, it meant the stage was set for the



Sgt Chloe Staite

third and final game between the Army and the RAF.

The aviators elected to field after winning the toss and an Army sisters pairing stormed to 116 runs in 15 overs, before LCpl Georgie Cant was bowled by Cpl Whitchurch, and Capt Connie Cant was run out by Skipper ASI(T) Molly Rebanks, who had a bowling economy of 1.17 and was awarded player of the tournament.

The Army ended their innings on 268 for two in 40 overs.

The RAF reply was halted with an unfortunate decision seeing opening batter Fg Off Emily Green being given a run out decision in the second over.

Some big-shot



IMPROVEMENT: 168 runs for the aviators was much better than last year's total

PHOTOS: PAUL MANNERING

play from Rebanks, smashing 12 fours, saw the aviators to 82 runs.

The skipper looked well set for a century until she was bowled

out by Rush at the halfway point through the innings.

The rest of the RAF line-up had a mammoth task to chase down the Army's big total.

Despite some valiant efforts, the RAF Women were all out for 168 runs after 37.4 overs, a huge improvement on last year's score of 28 all out.

RUGBY LEAGUE

# Kiwis and Aussies defeated as RAF rugby league stars shine

Continued from back page at Stanningley RLFC's Arthur Miller Stadium in Leeds.

RAF Head Coach Sgt James Hutchinson said: "We really wanted to win this; we have more steel about us. I told the lads at half time, 'the Aussies will always keep coming'."

"This is the first time a RAF

RAF	14
NZAF	10

RAF	12
RAAF	0

team has won the Tri-Nations and the first win against Australia on English soil.

"I played the Aussie Defence Force and lost three times, the lads have now given me that first win -

even though it came as a coach."

Following a scoreless first half which saw the Australian attack blunted with the aviators camped in the opposition's half, could a second half of such tenacity and skill be repeated by the hosts?

The answer was yes, and they ran in two early tries to seal the deal, before some superb late defence to halt a fightback by the visiting side.

Hutchinson added: "We needed to go again just a bit better. We had chances in the first half, but a forward pass and hold up on the line denied us."

"We wanted this tournament to be an Inter-Services dress rehearsal. We played badly in the opener, down in the main to New Zealand throwing the kitchen sink at us."

The fortnight of league action kicked off in London as New Zealand faced Australia at Wests Warriors RLFC, with a 32-12 win



LEADING BY EXAMPLE: Captain Cpl Nathan Barker's try sparked a comeback from the RAF against New Zealand in Yorkshire

PHOTOS: SBS

for the Aussies.

Seeing an early try denied, Australia scored out wide in what was dubbed the 'Down Under Derby'.

A defensive error saw the score pulled back to 6-2 before Australia scored again to lead 20-2 at the break, storming ahead to 32-6 before a final Kiwi try in the closing stages.

The series moved to

Stanningley, as the host nation faced New Zealand, and after a first half to forget, the aviators found themselves 10-4 down.

A late second half charge sparked by team captain Cpl Nathan Barker, who ran over a well-taken unconverted try, was then followed by one from ASI(T) Kieron Prescott. A third converted try from Cpl James Peach sealed the win.



NO WAY THROUGH: RAF kept a clean score sheet against Australia



## RUGBY UNION

## 11 aviators selected for IDRC event

**THE 30-WOMAN UKAF squad for the upcoming International Defence Rugby Competition features 11 of the Service's top stars.**

The last warm-up clash for the Forces team will be against England University Students on August 8, before they play their opening Pool 1 match against Tonga at Esher RFC on August 17.

The RAF players involved are:

- AR Daisy Aspinall – England U20s and Premiership side Gloucester Hartpury.
- AS1 Rebecca Defilippo – ex Wales star and Leicester Tigers.
- AS1 Daisy Fahey – Cheltenham Tigers.
- Sqn Ldr Elise Fletcher – Henley Hawks.
- AS1 Kim Grundy – Ealing Trailfinders.
- Sqn Ldr Lou Langton – ex-Portsmouth RFC, retiring from rugby after the IDRC.

- Cpl Tyler Lewis – Cheltenham Tigers.
- Flt Lt Lucy Nye – ex-England U20s, ex-England 7s, Exeter Chiefs.
- Cpl Orla Proctor – ex-Scotland U20s, Harlequins.
- Sgt Annie Forbes – Bury St Edmunds.
- AS1 Evie Longworth – Boston RFC.

## UKAF FIXTURES

- Pool Round 1 vs **Tonga**, Esher RFC, KT12 3PE, August 15, KO 1100.
- Pool Round 2 vs **Ireland**, Basingstoke RFC, RG22 5HH, August 21, KO 1400.
- Pool Round 3 vs **Zambia**, Aldershot RFC, GU12 4AL, August 25, KO 1100.
- **Semi Finals**, venue TBC, August 29/30.
- **Final**, venue TBC, Sept 2/3.



**UKAF CALL-UP:** RAF's Flt Lt Lucy Nye, AS1 Kim Grundy and AS1 Daisy Fahey  
PHOTO: LT REECE J MCCARTHY RN

## SAILING

## We're A Class act

## 342 victory for the RAF

**FIRST PLACE in the NHC A Class 342 sailing was the RAF's reward from this year's Inter-Service's Offshore Regatta on the Solent.**

Racing in two classes – IRC and 342s – all the teams took on the same courses over an inshore and offshore series, with differing fortunes.

In the IRC race, the RAF's Red Arrow competed against British Soldier and Sovereign Sail Navy.

The RAF team raced hard across a range of conditions, from drifting in two knots to blasting along in 30 knots.

Red Arrow ripped its mainsail and had an unexpected anchor drop, managing only third behind the winning Army and Royal Navy teams.

In the 342 class event, all teams raced identical yachts, Hallberg-Rassey 342s borrowed from Joint Services Sailing.

RAF Sailing media officer Sqn Ldr Andy King said: "The first offshore course for the IRC event was a long leg from Gosport to Brighton and then back to Yarmouth.

"The crew rest in Yarmouth overnight and then take on another long offshore leg to Portland Bill and back to Yarmouth.

"This preceded the inshore series, which we won, joining up with the Taittinger Regatta based out of the Royal Solent Yacht Club.

"The RAF came first in the Services for the NHC A Class (342 class) and fifth overall (including civilian boats) beating the Army into second and Royal Navy into third."

● Follow RAF Sailing on Instagram @rafsailing.



## MOTORSPORTS

## Silver lining at Grand Prix



**TROPHY CAR:** BMW 116 with (l-r) AS1(T) Ryan Worley, Cpl David Wrench, Cpl George Leslie and Cpl Conor Palmer

THE SERVICE'S motor and esports associations hit top gear at this year's British Grand Prix at Silverstone.

Members were in the Military Village at the famous racetrack over four days showing off their driving simulator skills, with the motorsport team's BMW 116 Trophy car also on display.

Personnel also marched the Union Flag along the track as part of the pre-race build-up, to accompany a Red Arrows flypast.

Motorsport association member Cpl Luke Arpino said: "A fantastic time was had by all that attended the Silverstone F1 GP, with 10 Members of the RAFMSA attending the event.

"Up to 450,000 spectators kept the atmosphere electric and the team received plenty of interest and enquiries at the RAF Motorsports stand, where we had the team's BMW 116 Trophy car on display and the racing SIM, representing the Esports side of the team. It was great to engage with members of the public."

Esports spokesperson Flt Lt Connor Stewart said: "Our association has grown to provide tangible evidence of digital skills that translate to our jobs and duties day-to-day. By supporting the RAF Motorsports Association, the RAF Esports platform is able to capture the transition of skills from a safe, synthetic environment on high-spec gaming PCs and simulators, to the real-world physical domain."



# 5 RAF Sport

pages of



Sarge is right on target in national archery round

See page 24



Eleven aviators in UKAF IDRC rugby squad

See page 27

RUGBY LEAGUE

# Tri-Nations Cup win is a first for RAF league stars



**HISTORY-MAKERS:** RAF take the spoils after back-to-back wins against Southern Hemisphere Defence teams PHOTO: SBS

**Daniel Abrahams**

SERVICE RUGBY league history was made at Cranwell after the 12-0 defeat of the Royal

Australian Air Force saw the RAF lift the Tri-Nations Cup.

The win came courtesy of tries from AS1s Harrison Reay and Cam Lees, with the extras kicked

by Cpl Elliot Kerry.

The trophy victory came after the aviators' tough 14-10 triumph over the New Zealand Air Force

● Continued on page 26

## SHOOTING



**BY ROYAL APPOINTMENT:** WO Alex Lilly meets King Charles PHOTO: ROB GOLDING AND BRITISH CEREMONIAL ARTS LTD

## WO shoots to Windsor

CHAMPION SHOT WO Alex Lilly chatted with His Majesty as he was presented with The King's Medal at Windsor Castle, a moment he called 'an extraordinary honour'.

The three times Service shooting competition winner, who had never received the medal in person before, added: "His Majesty asked about my shooting history, and how many times I had won the medal."

"He then asked about my place of work and what I do. I

let him know that I am on 54 Sqn at Waddington, working on Protector Training Flight, which is the replacement for Reaper.

"He knew a fair bit about it, knowing it was a US platform that was being built for the UK with UK capabilities."

Hotshot WO Lilly – who won The Queen's Medal in 2016 and 2018, before it became the King's Medal in 2023 – beat Cpl Nathaniel Webb, himself a QM 2022 and KM 2024 winner, to take this year's title.

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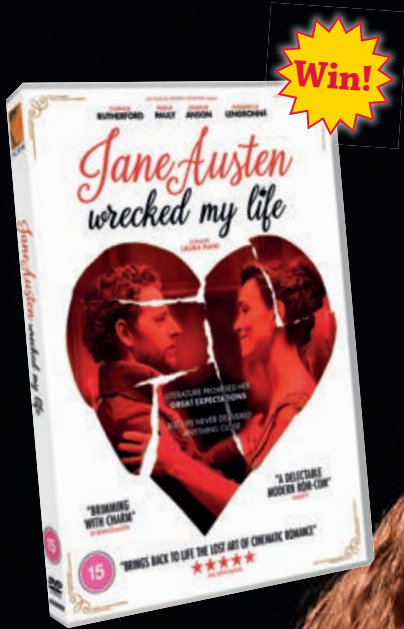


# The return of the Akrotiri 10s

And this time the women join the party – see page 25



# R'n'R



Win charming  
rom-com on DVD  
● p3



## Capturing hearts — Riverdance

● See  
pages  
4-5





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

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



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

**COMBAT  
STRESS**  
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH



## Exhibition

### Made in Ancient Egypt

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (Oct 3, 2025 to April 12, 2026)

# Ancient Egypt's artisans



**FIGURE OF A WOMAN:** Carved from lapis lazuli, 3325–2575 BCE ©Ashmolean Museum/Bridgeman Images

**T**HIS AUTUMN, the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge will present the first exhibition to explore ancient Egypt through the lens of its craftspeople.

*Made in Ancient Egypt*, which runs from October 3 to April 12, 2026, will reveal the untold stories of the makers, technologies and techniques behind extraordinary objects, shedding fresh light on how the ancient Egyptians produced visual forms that remain iconic today, including stone sculptures, decorated coffins and hieroglyphic inscriptions, said a Museum spokesperson.

“Until now, audiences have rarely had the opportunity to consider the makers – sculptors, potters, painters, metalworkers and designers – who were a

pivotal part of the pharaonic state [about 3100–30 BCE] and its culture across three millennia,” the spokesperson added.

“Bringing together both finished and unfinished works



from the Museum’s world-class collection, as well as from the Louvre, the Egyptian Museum, Berlin, and Rijksmuseum Leiden, this exhibition will take audiences into the world of the maker.

“For more than 40 years, the Fitzwilliam Museum has been at the forefront of

groundbreaking research on the making of ancient Egyptian artefacts.

Collaborating with experts from across the University of Cambridge and beyond, the Museum’s team of curators, scientists and conservators have used state-of-the-art tools – X-radiography, CT scanning, microscopy, organic residue analysis and advanced technical imaging – to arrive at new knowledge about the processes of crafting and manufacture.”

*Made in Ancient Egypt* will begin by focusing on the cartonnage mummy case of Nakhthefmut from Thebes (c.900 BCE), an iconic ancient Egyptian object in the Fitzwilliam collection.

Nakhthefmut worked at the temple of Amun-Re, King of the Gods at Karnak, where he was responsible for opening the shrine of the god each morning.

The spokesperson explained: “Through close observation,

combined with cutting-edge scientific analyses, this section will reveal how the coffin-makers worked: here combining linen soaked in layers of plaster-like pastes, animal glue, an array of pigments, varnish and gold leaf to shape, carve, inlay and paint this spectacular coffin.”

Other outstanding exhibits include the only known example of an intricate handmade glass polychrome vessel in the form of a ‘bulti’ fish (c. 1539–1292 BCE, pictured inset left) and the figure of a woman, believed to be the earliest surviving object carved in the metamorphic rock lapis lazuli.

● **Go to:** [museums.cam.ac.uk](https://museums.cam.ac.uk) for more information.

**SARCOPHAGUS:** Cartonnage mummy case of a priest called Nakhthefmut, 924–889 BCE Photograph © The Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge



## Music

### Robert Plant and Saving Grace

Saving Grace



## Rock icon Plant's new band

**F**ORMER LED Zeppelin frontman Robert Plant has announced the release of *Saving Grace*, the first album featuring vocalist Suzi Dian and a new band of musicians.

The album – which Plant (*inset below*) calls “a song book of the lost and found” – is out on September 26.

While his recent adventures have centred around Nashville, having reunited with Alison Krauss for 2021’s chart-topping, multi Grammy-nominated *Raise The Roof*, it was in the English countryside that Plant connected closely to the diverse group of musicians now also named Saving Grace.

They are Dian, drummer Oli Jefferson, guitarist Tony Kelsey, banjo and string player Matt Worley and cellist Barney Morse-Brown.

The album was produced by Plant and Saving Grace and recorded between April 2019 and January 2025 in the Cotswolds and on the Welsh Borders.

“We laugh a lot, really. I think that suits me. I like laughing,” Plant said. “You know, I can’t find any reason to be too serious about



**SAVING GRACE:** With Suzi Dian and Robert Plant, left

anything. I’m not jaded. The sweetness of the whole thing... These are sweet people and they are playing out all the stuff that they could never get out before. They have become unique stylists and together they seem to have landed in a most interesting place.”

After touring extensively across the UK and Europe, Plant and Saving Grace will perform for the first time in the US this autumn, with an initial run of a dozen North American shows including in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.

● **Go to:** [robertplant.com](https://robertplant.com) for more details.



## DVDs

### Jane Austen Wrecked My Life (15)

On Blu-ray, DVD & digital now (Icon Film Distribution)

## Austen fan's hunt for love

**D**ESCRIBED BY critics as ‘a delectable modern rom-com’, *Jane Austen Wrecked My Life* stars Camille Rutherford (*Anatomy of a Fall*) and Pablo Pauly (*The French Dispatch*).

Rutherford plays Agathe, hopelessly clumsy yet charming, and full of contradictions, who dreams of experiencing love akin to a Jane Austen novel. Instead she finds herself stuck in desperate singlehood, spending her days working in the legendary British bookshop, Shakespeare & Co in Paris, rather than pursuing her own ambitions of becoming a novelist.

But when an unexpected invitation to the Jane Austen Writers’ Residency in England lands in her lap, Agathe is in for an eye-opening and life-changing experience.

Director Laura Piani said: “Inspired not only by the many years that I myself spent working at Shakespeare & Co, this film was also fuelled by several stays in Chawton [where Jane Austen spent her last years], where I went to write my script.

“I wanted to draw the portrait of a young woman who believes so strongly that she doesn’t fit into this society, that she wishes she was born centuries ago,



**ROMANCE:** Agathe (Rutherford) and Felix (Pauly)

in her favourite novels. But unlike most romantic comedies, she won’t be ‘saved by the man’ but by her own efforts.

“Indeed, Agathe will only eventually fall in love with the right man after she has proved to herself that she was able to write, and to exist, by herself.”

2025 marks the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen’s birth and Jane Austen’s House in Chawton is hosting celebrations throughout the year, including the Persuasion Festival from September 12–21. Go to: [janeaustenshouse.org](https://janeaustenshouse.org) for details.

We have copies of this entertaining film on DVD to give away. For your chance to own one, tell us:

**In which year was Jane Austen born?**

Email your answer, marked Jane Austen DVD competition, to: [tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk](mailto: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 22.

**Win!**



# R'n'R



## Theatre A Wild Evening Guildford, London & Cambridge



**GORDON:** *Big Cats 24/7* presenter



**LIZZIE:** Scientist and marine expert

## Behind the scenes on wildlife shows

**TELEVISION WILDLIFE**  
**presenters Michaela**  
**Strachan and Gordon**  
**Buchanan will star in a new**  
**live stage extravaganza, *A Wild***  
***Evening*, this November.**

It promises to give theatre audiences a unique insight into what goes on behind the scenes during filming some of TV's biggest wildlife shows. It will also feature presenters Lizzie Daly and Hannah Stitfall.

Gordon, Lizzie, Hannah and Michaela will lift the lid on the real-life adventures that don't make it to air. The show begins on November 23 at Guildford's G-Live before heading to London's Cambridge Theatre on November 24 and to Cambridge's Corn Exchange on November 25.

Gordon, from *Big Cats 24/7* and *Our Changing Planet*, said: "We'll be sharing exciting stories from behind the scenes of time spent getting up close and personal with nature. I've been both behind and in front of

the camera – and what happens when the cameras stop rolling is often the most intense when you're out at the mercy of the elements.

"I look forward to sharing some of these moments to give crowds a sense of what it's like working in tough conditions to deliver incredible images in order to tell nature's stories from all over the world."

*Springwatch* star Michaela (below) added: "I have had an incredible career filming many different wildlife programmes and am so keen to share some of my stories. *A Wild Evening* will be a unique opportunity to hear four very different presenters talk about their passions and their wild adventures. Strap yourselves in and get ready for a wild ride!"

A scientist with a love of marine life, Lizzie has spent time in many extreme environments. A dedicated conservationist, she will take audiences on a dive into marine adventures, from swimming with sharks in Australia, to whales in South America, to giant jellyfish here at home.

She said: "A huge part of my research and exploration is driven by the knowledge that I can use what I've learned to educate others on incredible things I've witnessed along the way."

"I am honoured to be joining legends of wildlife TV Michaela, Hannah and Gordon on stage to share all our secrets with a live audience."

Hannah is a TV presenter, filmmaker and conservation advocate. She has garnered a sizeable and loyal following on social media, making her one of the most prolific wildlife influencers in the UK.

● Go to: [awildevening.co.uk](http://awildevening.co.uk) for booking details.



## Theatre Riverdance UK tour

**S**INCE *RIVERDANCE* first emerged onto the world stage, its fusion of Irish and international dance and music has captured the hearts of millions worldwide. The Grammy award-winning music and the infectious energy of its mesmerising choreography has established it as a global cultural phenomenon.

To celebrate its 30th year milestone, *Riverdance* starts a special anniversary tour this month featuring a new generation of dancers who were not even born when the original show took its first steps.

Among the rising stars are brother and sister Fergus and Anna Mai Fitzpatrick, both principal dancers on the upcoming tour. From a young age, both dreamed of joining the show. Years of dedication, elite training and competitive success followed. Fergus is a former world champion, Anna Mai took the crown at the All-Ireland Championship, the Great Britain Championship and the British National.

Now *Riverdance* has taken the siblings across the world – both have danced the lead at New York's legendary Radio City Music Hall, as well as across North America, Japan, China, Europe and Australia.

Fergus said: "It takes a lot of hard work for a lot of years, a lot of drive. In the back of our minds when we started dancing, the end goal was always *Riverdance*. However, before you get there, there is a whole competition scene. Now though, as Principal Dancer, I also feel that I need to outwork the younger guys who are coming through. They are so good, and of course they want my job, so I need to work hard and work smart."

Anna Mai added: "A love for the dancing and the show is crucial too. That's the dream I suppose, for any job, and we do wholeheartedly love what we do. That is what pushes me to be that one per cent better every day, keep the fire burning. The show takes a lot of work, when the audience sees the cast on stage, they see the glamorous end to what has been the work of an entire team helping each other to get to that point. We love the entire process."

With the show visiting 30 UK venues – one for each year of its history – preparation is essential, as for any *Riverdance* tour.

Fergus said: "We approach a set of live dates in a scientific way now, we think about how



# Riverda new ger

many shows there will be, what we will need in the way of recovery, how we will sustain being at the top of our game for so many shows. And, of course, the team helps us; *Riverdance* knows that we need a masseur on the road with us, a company physio, that kind of thing, to keep our bodies conditioned."

"It is also true," said Anna Mai, "That because we and the show have been to many of these places and cities before, that we have connections that we can tap into. And we love to use our time off and get to know an area even better, do some touristy things, catch up with old friends." "With *Riverdance*, many things are constantly changing;

you will never be on the road with exactly the same people, on exactly the same tour routing. There is always a new energy, a new buzz, and that's really fun to feed off. We're making memories together.

"It is hard to describe the magic of *Riverdance* to someone who hasn't seen it – it is the human emotion that keeps the fans coming back. They come for the feeling that they leave the show with."

Both Fergus and Anna Mai are aware of the passing of the torch between generations of dancers. Fergus revealed that dancing in front of hundreds of *Riverdance* 'alumni' at a recent celebration of the 30th anniversary was quite an experience.

He said: "It was daunting, because those guys have done some of the solos so many times, but actually we have a great network with them, and the show honours what and who has come before of course. We're proud to be in the roles that we have, and we want to inspire the next generation that will follow us."

● Go to: [riverdance.com](http://riverdance.com) for tour dates.





Edited by Tracey Allen



HIGH-ENERGY:  
Riverdance at 30

# nce: the neration



PRINCIPAL DANCER: Anna Mai Fitzpatrick, centre, and with brother Fergus, left



## Books

**Fast Jets on the Front Line**  
grubstreet.co.uk

**Win!**

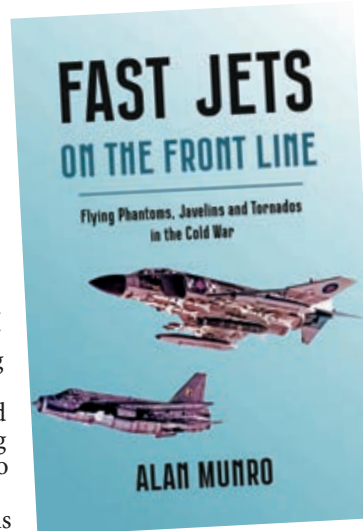
# Phantom pilot's cockpit view of Cold War fast jets

**I**N *FAST Jets On the Front Line* (grubstreet.co.uk) Alan Munro reflects on his time in the RAF and the Cold War jets he flew.

Having begun his career after basic training on the Gloster Javelin with No.228 OCU, he became a flying instructor at No. 1 Flying Training School, Linton-on-Ouse. But with the UK's withdrawal from East of Suez he found himself with a ground posting and questioning whether he would see front line flying again.

Luckily this wasn't the case and Alan was soon posted to Lightning and Harriers before returning to 228 OCU to fly on Phantoms.

The author's time on Phantoms is the main crux of the book. He discusses how the withdrawal of Lightning from the Air Force changed the Phantom's role from attack to defence and the impact this had on Phantom squadrons like 29 Sqn, which he flew on.



He then joined 19 Sqn as they became operational and part of RAF Germany's Battle Flight. During his time with RAF Germany, Alan flew with a number of Nato countries, this then led to a tour at the Nato Tactical Leadership Programme in Jever, north Germany, before he finished his RAF service on the Tornado GR1 in the early 1990s.

The book – ideal for fans of Cold War era fighters – is illustrated throughout with photographs from the author's private collection – and you could win a copy.

For your chance to own one, answer this question correctly:

**Which aircraft did Alan Munro fly when he returned to 228 OCU?**

Email your answer, marked Fast Jets 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 22. Please include your full postal address.



## Theatre

**The Talented Mr Ripley**  
UK tour

# McVey has a talent for deception as Mr Ripley

**T**he Crown's Ed McVey and *EastEnders* star and *Strictly Come Dancing* finalist Maisie Smith will take the lead roles in the first UK tour of Patricia Highsmith's classic thriller *The Talented Mr Ripley* before it moves to the West End.

The show opens at the Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham on September 4, and goes to various venues including Birmingham Rep (September 22-27), Oxford Playhouse (October 13-18) and Bristol's Old Vic (November 3-8), finishing at the Lowry, Salford (Nov 18-22).

This year marks the 70th anniversary of Highsmith's gripping novel, the source material for the 2000 Oscar-nominated film starring Matt Damon, Jude Law and Gwyneth Paltrow; the 2024 Netflix adaptation starring Andrew Scott; and the stage adaptation.

McVey is best known for his debut performance as Prince William in Netflix's *The Crown* and Smith is famous for her portrayal of Tiffany Butcher in *EastEnders*. Most recently, she toured arenas across the UK and Europe as Beth in *Jeff Wayne's The War of the Worlds – Spirit of Man Tour 2025*.

Tom Ripley is a nobody – until he's offered an unexpected opportunity: travel to Italy and bring home the wealthy and carefree Dickie Greenleaf. But as Tom is drawn into Dickie's glittering world of privilege, his obsession takes a



STARS: Ed McVey and Maisie Smith, inset



dark turn. What begins as an innocent invitation spirals into a web of lies, identity theft and murder, set against the sun-drenched backdrop of 1950s Italy.

McVey stars as Ripley and Smith plays Marge Sherwood, Dickie's girlfriend.

● Go to: [thetalentedmrripley.play.com](https://thetalentedmrripley.play.com) for full tour details.





## Your Announcements

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

### Deaths

**BLACKLEDGE** Kath (née Wigg). DSA 76-83. Served at Catterick (lived at Leeming), West Drayton, Odiham and St Athan. With detachments to Aldergrove and Northolt. Kath passed away July 21, aged 67. Survived by husband Craig (Ernie), children Zoé and Lee and grandchildren Neve, Frazer and Adam. Funeral Directors Frank Stephenson & Son. Beverley, HU17 8HP. Tel: 01842 881367



**Kath Blackledge**

**WAITE** Ronald, passed away peacefully on July 1 at the age of 93. He worked on RAF bases for a total of 73 years, reaching the rank of Warrant Officer. After retiring from the RAF he continued working as a part-time bookkeeper for RAF St Mawgan until the age of 91. Details of the funeral are available from Henwood Funerals.

### Seeking

I am seeking incidents of ghostly or paranormal phenomena at the ex-RAF base at Bircham Newton in Norfolk (now the Construction Industry Training Board), either on site or in the nearby accommodation. Thank you. Paul Lee, email: paul@paullee.com

**SEEKING** Warrant Officer

Morgan Russell Price, MBE, formerly stationed at RAF Leeming, born in Loughborough in 1969. Urgently need to get in touch with him. Email: lyndasmart31@gmail.com

**SEEKING** anyone who served with or knew WO Henry Hamar during and/or following WWII, any information will be gladly received, contact: andyhilton75@hotmail.com

**CALLING** ex members of 230 OCU RAF Finningley who served there during the 1960s. I am seeking 230 OCU's Squadron Crest to make a wall shield. Email: rogerparker1944@icloud.com maybe for a get-together some time in the future.

**225 Squadron** – I am seeking the current custodian of the 225 Sqn Association archives. Shortly before his death in 2011 my father, Maurice Potts (pictured below in 1943), loaned his wartime logbook to someone in the Association for research purposes, but it was never returned – perhaps because of his passing. The last contact I can find is 225's former CO, Sqn Ldr Gordon Henderson, but he died in 2009. I am now pursuing my own research into the squadron with a view to publication of my father's extensive wartime diary, and would be very grateful for the safe return of his logbook so that I can ratify various facts. Please email: marcus@cmcgraphics.co.uk



### Reunions

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

**ALL** ex Clk Secs who were trained on the Apprentice Wing at RAF Credenhill in the 1960s and 1970s are cordially invited to contact the undersigned with a view to arranging a reunion in 2025. Please email: David.tibbett@ntlworld.com

**217 Craft Apprentices** RAF Halton, 55 years Reunion, September 30 and October 1 at the Petwood Hotel, Woodhall Spa, LN10 6QG. BBMF & IBCC trips planned for during the day with a formal dinner on the evening of October 1. Please contact Gerry Evans on: 01793 764236 or email: gerry.e.54@btinternet.com

**THE** RAF Masirah and RAF Salalah Veterans Association AGM and Reunion Gala Dinner is to be held on Saturday, October 4 at The Park Royal Hotel, Stretton, Warrington, Cheshire WA4 4NS. All members are welcome to attend. If you are interested in attending the reunion, please contact Alan Teasdale on: joalteas@btinternet.com. If you would like to join the Association as a member, please visit our website: omanrafveterans.org for further information.

**103RD** Entry RAF Halton Apprentices Reunion October 17 at the The Park House Hotel in Shifnal, TF11 9BA, 7pm. Contact Mick Woodhouse on: 07811 401040, email: mickjwoodhouse1946@gmail.com or through: 103rd-entry.org.uk



**OUTSTANDING:** RAF musicians perform

## Free Friends concert

THE CENTRAL Church of the RAF, St Clement Danes in The Strand, London, is holding its annual Friends Concert on Thursday, November 27, starting at 6.30pm.

The concert features the Central Band of the RAF and the Choir of St Clement Danes (professional opera singers in their 'spare' time), and will include exciting new and well-loved musical favourites. Refreshments are available after the performance.

More than 150 people have

already requested tickets for this free concert (donations to support the work of the Friends are welcome), but there are many tickets available, said concert coordinator Simon Denny.

Mr Denny added: "The concert combines outstanding musicianship with the chance to connect with the RAF family, it is a wonderful opening to the build up to Christmas."

● **RAF News** readers can request tickets by emailing: concert@fscd.org.uk

## Sing with the Spitfires



**IN HARMONY:** RAF Spitfires at the Choir Blast Festival in June

THE RAF Spitfires Choir is currently looking for new members. Established in 2009, the choir has a Whole Force membership of regular and reserve personnel, veterans and civil servants who work within the RAF.

Sqn Ldr Sally Evans from the Choir said: "The choir is an amateur ensemble, members serve in a variety of professions across the RAF, coming together monthly to enjoy singing and to be the best possible cultural ambassadors for our Service."

The Spitfires Choir has collaborated with the BBC Singers, and broadcasts on BBC radio and

television for the anniversaries of the Battle of Britain and the Battle of the Somme. The choir also performed for two years on the BBC's *Strictly Come Dancing* for its Remembrance Day shows.

"We regularly support fundraising events for military charities including the RAF Benevolent Fund and Royal British Legion," added Sqn Ldr Evans.

The Choir's next rehearsals are from 10am–3pm on September 6 at RAF Northolt. Contact the choir on: BZN-RAF-Spitfires-Choir@mod.gov.uk or email the co-managers: Aleathea.Hill586@mod.gov.uk and Sophie.Hobson400@mod.gov.uk

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## Your Announcements

You can email photos for announcements on this page to:  
[tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk](mailto:tracey.allen@rafnews.co.uk)



**COMMITMENT:**  
Gen Colardelle,  
left, and Gp Capt  
McIntyre

## OCs are brothers in arms

MEMBERS OF No 32 (The Royal) Squadron deployed to French Air Force Base Villacoublay to take part in a ceremony commemorating the official twinning with their French counterparts, Escadron de Transport 60 (ET60).

"The day coincided with ET60's 80th anniversary and involved a parade and inspection of both ET60 and 32 (TR) Sqn personnel," said Wg Cdr Eoin Sands, OC No 32 (TR) Sqn.

"General Cédric Colardelle, Commanding General of the Air Assault and Projection Brigade, and Gp Capt Andrew McIntyre,

Commander Air Mobility Air Wing, signed a road map prior to the ceremony which declared the two Squadron OCs 'frère d'armes' [brothers in arms], formalising the strong and growing relationship between the two units.

"32 (TR) Sqn and ET60 both fly Dassault Falcon aircraft [known in the RAF as the Envoy] in the Command Support Air Transport role," Wg Cdr Sands added.

"The new partnership is not just a symbolic gesture, but a practical commitment to enhanced cooperation in areas such as flight safety, mission planning and training."

## Dan's six-day cycle challenge

A FORMER air cadet is taking on a gruelling fundraising challenge this autumn in memory of a fellow comrade.

Dan Avey-Hebditch is aiming to raise £4,000 for The John Thornton Young Achievers Foundation, set up by the parents of Lt John Thornton, who was killed in Afghanistan in 2008 aged just 22 while serving with the Royal Marines.

The Foundation provides bursaries and scholarships to young people in Dorset and Wiltshire to support their personal development.

Starting on September 7, Dan will be cycling from Land's End of John o'Groats (LEJOG) – at least 1,040 miles and at a 40,000 ft elevation – in just six days, riding solo and unsupported.

He said: "John would have been 40 this year. To do his memory and the charity justice, I'm adding an extra challenge to LEJOG. I'm riding down there, starting at Ferndown Upper School in Dorset, where John was a pupil, and going via the Commando Training Centre



**IN MEMORY:**  
Dan Avey-  
Hebditch  
at Lt John  
Thornton's  
grave

Royal Marines at Lympstone, Devon, where he trained.

"On the LEJOG route itself I'm diverting to visit his former unit, 40 Commando RM."

John was a cadet with

2358 (Ferndown) Air Cadets Squadron and Dan was with 1069 (Wimborne) Sqn.

Go to: [justgiving.com/page/dan-avey-hebditch](http://justgiving.com/page/dan-avey-hebditch) or [jtyaf.org](http://jtyaf.org) to donate.

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## RAF News

The official voice of the Royal Air Force





Crossword

No. 391

Solve the crossword, then rearrange the 6 letters in yellow squares to find an RAF term.

Across

- 6. Protective pop supergroup? (4,3)
- 7. May aluminium float in Venetian attraction? (5)
- 9. He would, for example, return protection (5)
- 10. Scotsman welcome to north-eastern contraption (7)
- 12. Duck deposit? (4,7)
- 14. Georgia acid about military base (5,6)
- 18. Royal consort at a prairie province (7)
- 19. Landing stage sounds RAF-like (5)
- 21. Suggestion to remove top of strongbox (5)
- 22. RAF back truant in a bad state (3,4)

Down

- 1. See 3 Down
- 2. Slow time party involving a US soldier (6)
- 3. And 1 Down. Acrid tea stirred by RAF member (3,5)
- 4. Mother creates harm at RAF base (6)
- 5. Farm building, single with no exceptions (3,4)
- 8. In short anagram, foreign air base is revealed (7)
- 11. Chess pieces for hours of darkness, we hear (7)
- 13. RAF operation originally attacked Italian resistance, losing its ferocity though (7)
- 15. Wow! Wow! A horse! (3-3)
- 16. More than a cold snap (3,3)
- 17. And 20 Down. Torpedo straying badly (5,3)
- 20. See 17 Down

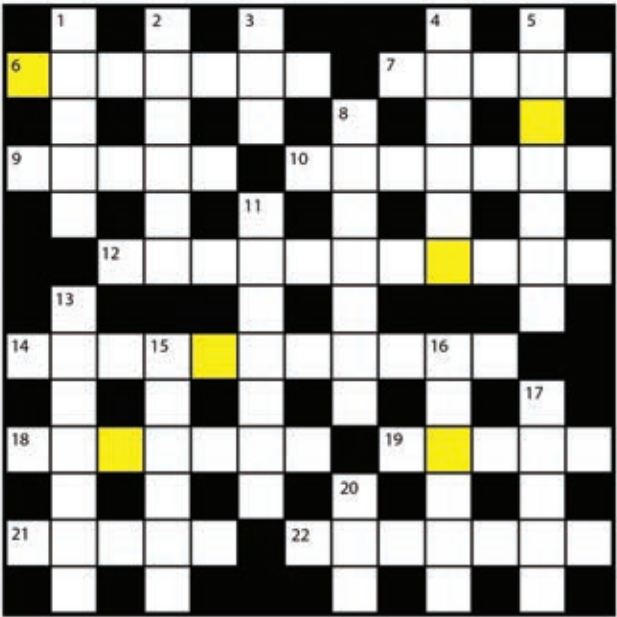
Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

RAF term: .....Crossword No. 391

This edition’s Crossword and Su Doku puzzles are just for fun for you to do at home, no need to send your entries in.



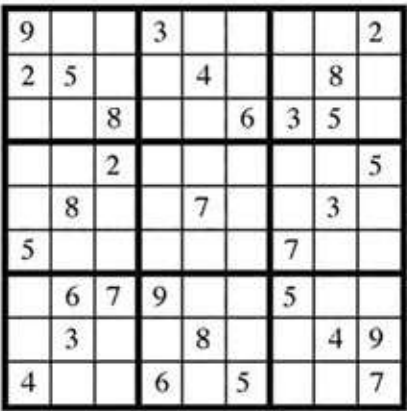
Solution to Crossword No. 390  
Across – 1. Emma 8. Formidable 9. Marriage 10. Fame 12. Acacia  
14. Shield 15. Vienna 17. Deeper 18. Dodo 19. Inkstand 21. Waddington  
22. Gamp  
Down - 2. Maraschino 3. Afar 4. Armada 5. Liners 6. Caffeine 7. Cede  
11. Millennium 13. Concorde 16. Aliens 17. Dakota 18. Down 20. Tang  
RAF aircraft – Poseidon



Su Doku

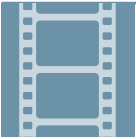
No. 401

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.



Solution to Su Doku No. 400

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



Film Review

Tin Soldier (15)

Streaming now (Signature Entertainment)

Foxx and co fail to hit mark

VETERANS WITH PTSD are taken in by The Program, covertly transforming them into an underground militia in the highly confusing, star-studded flop that is *Tin Soldier*.

Scott Eastwood plays Nash, a combat veteran taken in by The Program, but after losing his wife (Evoli Carmichael) in a car crash, he is back in society and struggling to find his place once more. A spark of hope emerges when Special Forces enlist him for an extraction mission – one that becomes personal when he learns his wife might still be alive and held by The Program.

Jamie Foxx takes centre stage as the all-singing and dancing charismatic cult leader. There are shades of Waco and Jonestown in the idea, but *Tin Soldier* drifts from any recognisable reality. Robert De Niro appears just long enough to justify his place on the poster, but unfortunately, the story remains in Eastwood’s hands.

The biggest issue for the film is its incoherence. This is not helped by telling the story on different timelines and from the perspective of Nash, whose fractured memories will manifest as full-blown



JAMIE FOXX: Plays charismatic cult leader in *Tin Soldier*

hallucinations. Then there are the more action-packed sequences that take place in near-total darkness with relentless camera shake, making it hard to know what’s happening – let alone care. One particularly gruelling sequence is strobe-lit, turning into more of an endurance test than entertainment.

Despite a runtime of just 86 minutes, the film feels like a slog. Foxx injects some energy, but his performance feels at odds with the tone. There are interesting ideas here about trauma and manipulation, but none are developed into anything meaningful. Instead, *Tin Soldier* collapses under its own confusion, squandering its cast and its premise.

One out of five roundels  
Review by Sam Cooney



Music

Tom Petty

Somewhere You Feel Free: The Making of Wildflowers

Petty story out on Blu-ray

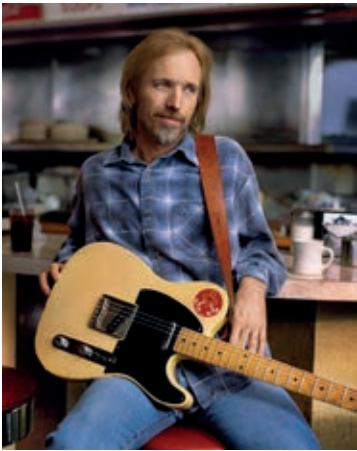
A CRITICALLY acclaimed documentary about rock star Tom Petty will be available for the first time on Blu-ray from September 12.

The first-ever release in a physical format of *Tom Petty, Somewhere You Feel Free: The Making of Wildflowers* features 30 minutes of bonus content, including four videos.

The 89-minute film looks into the creative mastery and turbulent personal life of the American singer, songwriter and guitarist, capturing the period of 1993-95 when Petty worked with legendary producer Rick Rubin for the first time.

It features a collection of 16mm film that was discovered in Petty’s archive in 2020, including unseen footage captured during the making of his personal masterpiece *Wildflowers*.

Over his 40-year career, Tom Petty became world-renowned for his songwriting and his band the Heartbreakers. In addition to the 13 studio albums he made with the Heartbreakers, Petty recorded three solo albums, including the acclaimed *Full Moon Fever* and *Wildflowers*.



TOM PETTY: Renowned rock artist

Petty was also a member of the supergroup The Traveling Wilburys.

The film includes interviews with Rubin, Heartbreakers guitarist Mike Campbell and keyboardist Benmont Tench and Petty’s daughter Adria.

Tom Petty passed away in 2017 shortly after completing his 40th anniversary tour, leaving behind a trove of unreleased material.

Go to: [tompetty.com](http://tompetty.com) for more information.