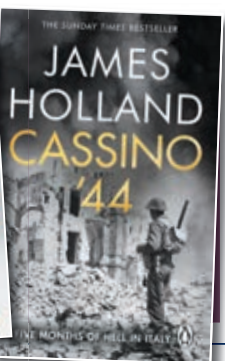


**The Forces' favourite paper**

**Top WWII books up for grabs**

● See R'n'R pages 3 and 5

**Win!**



**ROYAL AIR FORCE**

Friday, May 16, 2025  
Edition No.1608

**Only 99p**

# RAF News



● Win £350 AVI-8 watch: p17

**Nation marks**  
**VE 80<sup>th</sup>**

See pages 14-15



**Rugby**  
**Flt Lt Amy's W6N victory**



● See page 23

**Climbing**  
**Rock'n'Awe in Sheffield**



● See page p27

**Karting**  
**King Ling takes crown**



● See page p28

## Storm force



**New ACP raising  
air combat stakes**

**Simon Mander**

A NEW radar-jamming drone that can neutralise enemy defence systems and is set to spearhead air combat operations has been unveiled.

The UK-built StormShroud Autonomous Collaborative Platform uses ground-breaking BriteStorm signal jammers to allow Typhoon and F-35 Lightning fighters to avoid detection and deadly ground-to-air defences.

Chief of the Air Staff, ACM Sir Richard Knighton, said: "This is a seminal moment for the RAF to maintain our advantage in air combat and national security."

● See page 5



BiteSize

“We will soon start flight testing our own E-7A aircraft,”



RAF test pilot Sqn Ldr Angus Lilly after U.S. Wedgetail trial  
See page 7

“I encountered the show’s real-life namesake out in LA,”



EastEnders Michelle Collins plays Motorhome Marilyn in new Fringe Festival show  
See R’n’R page 4

“We’re back together in June to prepare for the World Cup,”



Scotland’s Fg Off Sarah Bonar  
See page 23



**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

Vets’ health pledge

VETERANS AND their families are to receive improved and targeted healthcare, the Government has revealed, as the UK continues to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

NHS staff will work with regional trainers to improve their understanding of the health needs of military personnel, veterans and their families.

Veterans Minister Al Carns said: “Our veterans have served with distinction and they deserve healthcare that recognises their unique needs and experiences.”

The £1.8 million programme will also focus on combat injuries and conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression.

Health Secretary Wes Streeting added: “Too many veterans face a system that doesn’t fully understand their needs – that changes today.

“This new training programme will help NHS staff across England give our veterans the personalised care they deserve.”



**This Week In History**

**1973**  
**Cod Wars**



NIMROD SURVEILLANCE aircraft begin sorties to track Icelandic gunboats and trawlers during the second Cod Wars over fishing rights.

**1943**  
**Dambuster raids**



A FORCE of 617 Sqn Lancasters led by Wg Cdr Guy Gibson launch the Dambusters raid from Scampton, destroying dams in Ruhr Valley, disrupting transport and industry across the region.

**2001**  
**C-17 Globemaster lands**



THE C-17 Globemaster III heavy-lift transport aircraft enters RAF Service with 99 Sqn at Brize Norton in Oxfordshire.

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



## RAF VE Day chefs reach for the pies



**PIES THE LIMIT:** Chefs at Coningsby served up 1940s-style fare and there were Ration Book menus for diners (below)

WARTIME rationing was back on the menu as Coningsby catering flight marked VE Day with a special meal.

Front of house staff donned Women's Land Army costumes to welcome personnel as they queued up for lunches including Woolton pie.

The vegetable and pastry dish was widely served in Britain when shortages made meals hard to prepare.



Executive Chef FS Tony Hammond said: "We've developed a menu that closely mirrors the kind of food people would have eaten towards the end of the war – to recreate a piece of history in the kitchen."

But today's personnel still needed a full intake of calories.

Executive Mess Manager FS Jamie Dixon said: "Woolton Pie is a well-known ration-era favourite and was one of the vegetarian options we offered; it is hearty, filling, and surprisingly flavourful."

# C-17 crew outfox the elements



**2 million litres of fuel delivered in -40° conditions**

## Simon Mander

OPERATING IN -40°C conditions, UK Globemaster crews flew into the Earth's most northerly settlement more than 1,000 miles within the Arctic Circle to resupply a Canadian research station.

Flying from Pituffik Space Base in Greenland, the 12-strong group of Brize-based air and ground crew joined the RCAF mission to deliver vital kit and fuel to the CFS Alert base which monitors climate and environmental changes.

When the Arctic Sea freezes the only way in or out is by C-17 or C-130 aircraft, landing on a 5,500ft long snow and gravel runway.

During the two-week operation crews delivered nearly two million litres of jet fuel from the aircraft's tanks to containers to power heaters, generators



**NORTHERN EXPOSURE:** Globemaster crew

and communications and scientific equipment.

As well as seeing breathtaking landscapes and sunsets, personnel also had a close encounter with a curious Arctic fox, inset top.

RAF detachment commander Flt Lt

Chandler said: "Flying in the extreme north presents a number of challenges that us Brits aren't used to."

"When it's -40°C even the simplest things can get difficult real quick, and when you're landing a 200-ton jet on a strip less than half the length of Heathrow, that's also covered in ice, it's far from simple."

At more than 82 degrees north, CFS Alert is the most northerly permanent settlement on Earth that conducts critical climate change research as well as supporting Canadian military operations.

Junior co-pilot Flt Lt Shaw added: "It's been amazing to learn from the Canadians. These guys are born for this stuff and training this far north is an awesome opportunity we can't get anywhere else."

# Warfighters fully integrated

AMERICA'S TOP warfighters course has been held in Britain for the first time.

US personnel joined UK and Australian comrades at RAF Waddington for advanced tuition normally held at Hurlburt Field, Florida.

505th Wing Commander USAF, Col Ryan Hayde, said: "This is another positive step toward strengthening our partnerships with our international allies."

"Integrated training allows for the sharing of expertise and resources, ultimately increasing

the combat effectiveness of allied air forces."

The lessons prepare planners to lead operational teams and integrate joint and coalition capabilities across multiple warfighting domains.

RAF Air and Space Warfare commanders sponsored the USAF 705th Sqn mobile training team to teach a blend of allied instructors in the largest class to date.

Graduating course leader Wg Cdr Mark Still said: "Bringing together personnel from the US Air Force, RAF and RAAF in the

UK is a key demonstration of our joint commitment to improve processes and better prepare our operational planning teams."

RAF guest speakers enhanced the content with guided tours of Cranwell, the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and a graduation ceremony at Coningsby.

Eleven RAF, one RAAF, three US Air Force Reserve, one Air National Guard, two US Space Force and 11 US Air Force warfighters learned how to integrate capabilities available to a Combined or Joint Force Air Component Commander.



**MILITARY FIRST:** Course graduates and trainers

Sqn Ldr Alistair Benson said: "The skill sets that were taught are vital to increasing the lethality of our militaries as we move into the future."

The RAF graduates are: Wg Cdr Sophie Atkinson, 2 Group; Sqn Ldr Alistair Benson, HQ USAF; Sqn Ldr Steven Bradley,

11 Group; Flt Lt Jak Carradice, ASWC; Wg Cdr Will Cornwell, ASWC; Sqn Ldr John Cuffe, 2 Sqn; Flt Lt Simon Day, 11 Group; Flt Lt Daniel Langston, ASWC; Sqn Ldr Howard Leach, Air Battlespace Training Centre; Wg Cdr Mark Still, ASWC and Sqn Ldr David Tipler, 90 SU.





# Exciting news!

## Applications open 1st April 2025



Scan to start  
applying now!



**Improving the lives of Defence  
Communities, one project at a time.**  
Applications open 1st Apr – 30th May

Above projects, left to right:  
A Garden Oasis for **HMS Collingwood**  
**RAF Cranwell's** New Tabletop Gaming Haven  
NAAFI Fund Scores Big for **Gibraltar Hockey Goalies**

     
@naafisocial



# UK StormShroud to counter Putin missile threat

**Radar-jamming kit learns lessons from Ukraine war, Defence chiefs say**



**COMBAT EDGE:** New ACP will allow Typhoon and F-35 to strike undetected. Below, CAS Sir Richard Knighton with 216 Sqn personnel who will operate the uncrewed platform. Inset left, Sir Richard with Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer

## Simon Mander

**NEW BRITISH-MADE uncrewed StormShroud aircraft are to spearhead combat missions by jamming enemy radar systems and allowing frontline fighters to attack targets unseen.**

The drones will support Typhoons and F-35 Lightnings, knocking out enemy air defences ahead of air strikes.

Defence chiefs say the system, which will be operated by 216 Sqn, will make jets more survivable and lethal by using BriteStorm signal jammers to disrupt enemy radar at long ranges, allowing UK fighters to attack targets unseen.

StormShroud has been developed using lessons from the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, as well as other operational theatres around the world, the MOD said.

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Richard Knighton, said: "This is a seminal moment for the RAF to maintain our advantage in air combat and national security."

The Air Force is investing an initial £19 million in the devices – the first of a family of drones known as Autonomous Collaborative Platforms.

Manufacturer Tekever have used its AR3 and AR5 devices on the frontline in more than 10,000 hours of flight for Ukraine's forces.

The RAF is taking the next step by integrating signal-scrambling technology into the drones to

boost the UK's defences at home.

Tekever Chief Executive Ricardo Mendes said the firm delivered StormShroud in under six months and announced a further £400m investment across the UK over the next five years.

The latest boost to the UK's defence capabilities comes as Britain continues to play a leading role in peace negotiations driving forward the 'Coalition of the Willing' and accelerating defence industrial cooperation with Ukraine.

The system was unveiled during a visit by Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer who saw first-hand the expertise that goes into manufacturing the drones at the Leonardo UK site in Luton.

He said: "Together with our allies, this government is taking the bold action needed to stand up to Putin and ruthlessly protect UK and European security."

The Ministry of Defence says it offers high-end electronic warfare without the need for crew on board, reducing risk and freeing up personnel for other tasks. StormShroud has been developed in the UK by the RAF's Rapid Capabilities Office and the Catalyst team in Defence Equipment & Support (DE&S).

StormShroud entered service with 216 Sqn earlier this month and will be operated by regular and reserve personnel and supported by Leonardo and other industry partners.







# Do you need some headspace?

We offer **FREE** memberships to the online mindfulness app Headspace, for RAF serving personnel and their partners.

- ✓ Improved mood, relaxation and sleep quality
- ✓ Focus on specific areas such as sport, health or happiness

Sign up today: [rafbf.org/headspace](https://rafbf.org/headspace)

Call our helpline: **0300 102 1919**



SCAN  
ME WITH  
YOUR  
CAMERA



**Royal Air Force  
Benevolent Fund**



The RAF Benevolent Fund is a registered charity in England and Wales (1081009) and Scotland (SC038109).





THE CARRIER Strike Group arrived off the Sicilian coast taking in the view of the active Stromboli volcano as crews prepare to take part in Exercise Mediterranean Strike.

# Taylor nails Rivet Joint post

**Simon Mander**

BRITAIN'S ELECTRONIC surveillance fleet has a new boss after Wg Cdr Thurston Taylor took over command of 51 Sqn.

The Waddington-based Rivet Joint unit has spent 85 per cent of its flying hours on operations over the past three years.

Wg Cdr Taylor said: "I have assumed command at a time of intense operational focus, with both aircraft and personnel deploying to support the Carrier Strike Group."

He took over from Wg Cdr Keith Bissett at a small ceremony outside the Sqn headquarters.

Wg Cdr Bissett said: "It has been a privilege to command



HANDOVER: Wg Cdr Bissett, left, welcomes Wg Cdr Taylor at Waddington

the almost 300 people as we have delivered on a record number of operational flights together.

"The men and women of 51 Sqn really make the most of the RC-135 Rivet Joint capability."

# US trial fuels Wedge pledge

## UK joins trilateral test to boost E-7 partnership

**Simon Mander**

A COMBINED crew of British, Australian and American personnel refuelled a Wedgetail early warning aircraft for the first time, gathering critical test data.

A 418th Flight Test Sqn KC-46A Pegasus tanker topped up the Royal Australian Air Force E-7A in airspace over the Mojave Desert near Edwards Air Force Base, California.

RAF test pilot Sqn Ldr Angus Lilly said: "This test reflects the interoperability between our three nations. We will soon begin flight testing our own E-7A aircraft, and this early collaboration will help us field our capability more efficiently."

This milestone certifies KC-46A Pegasus air-to-air refuelling of the RAAF's E-7A Wedgetail, while streamlining USAF and RAF E-7 Wedgetail certification efforts.

The move is part of a broader vision of trilateral collaboration to boost operational capability through mutual support, shared resources and enhanced reliability, air chiefs say.

Bringing three nations together for the experiment presented challenges, including secure data sharing between the KC-46 and E-7A, two aircraft that had never interfaced.

418th FLTS test pilot Maj



Matthew Daughtery added: "Sharing data and understanding how to dissect and utilise the information is just as important as the actual test certification.

"There are no benchmarks or precedents for aligning these systems. The USAF and RAAF use different rules and nomenclatures. A key part of



MOJAVE MISSION: Above, RAF Wedgetail is refuelled by Pegasus tanker marking a first for the international Wedgetail programme. Pictured left, Sqn Ldr Lilly (right) joins his USAF and RAAF counterparts at Edwards

developmental testing is to find a path to success."

Both the RAF and the USAF are preparing to transition to E-7 Wedgetail operations.

## Bulletin



## Typhoon on a Rolls

A £563 million contract for Rolls-Royce to maintain the RAF's fleet of Typhoon fighter jets has been announced.

The work to maintain 130 engines will take place in Bristol and beyond.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced the deal at the London Defence Conference this month.

It comes less than a week after he hailed the RAF's new UK-made StormShroud drones – a technology designed to make combat aircraft more survivable and lethal by jamming enemy radar at long ranges.

He said the government would seize the 'defence dividend' of increased investment in defence, to create jobs, wealth and opportunity.

Sir Keir said: "Britain's victory in WWII was not just a victory for Britain. It was a victory for good against the assembled forces of hatred, tyranny and evil, for the light of our values – in a world that tried to put them out."

"Now, as you know, there are people who would happily do likewise today. Our values and security are confronted daily. We must use this moment to deliver security and renewal for our country."





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



## WORCESTERSHIRE MEDAL SERVICE LTD

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

Visit Our Website:  
[www.worcmedals.com](http://www.worcmedals.com)

+44(0)1527 835375  
[sales@worcmedals.com](mailto:sales@worcmedals.com)

124 High Street, Bromsgrove, B61 8HJ





## Falcons Fall In

**Simon Mander**

DAREDEVIL PARACHUTISTS from the RAF Falcons officially launched their season with a display above their Oxfordshire home.

Schoolchildren, dignitaries, sponsors and station personnel thrilled at their debut performance at Brize Norton.

Flt Lt Alice Adams-Cairns said: "It has been amazing to launch our season at Brize Norton, our home base – which was evident in the crowd's reaction."

"This is just the beginning – we can't wait to showcase our display around the UK and overseas throughout the display year ahead."

It is their first appearance since receiving Public Display Authority.



## Licence to drill

PERSONNEL LED a simulated aircraft crash exercise to test response rates and procedures at Valley.

As the only RAF Main Operating Base in Wales, the station is mandated to complete the drill with civil emergency services every two years.

Sqn Ldr Mike Jones said: "These exercises sharpen our readiness and ensure we can respond as one team when it matters most."

# Campaigner Hayley hits the Great Wall of Shiners

**Simon Mander**

A COMBAT stress campaigner whose charity has raised thousands for Forces mental health support has signed on Cranwell's Wall of Honour.

Healing Military Minds founder and former RAF Air Stewardess Cpl Hayley Court likens her own military prowess to Goldie Hawn's in the film *Private Benjamin*, but still flies as a 622 Sqn reservist on Voyager.

After seeing the impact of trauma in 2021, Hayley started Healing Military Minds and is now on course to raise £200,000 by early next year.

Aircrew SERE Training Centre instructor Mark Fairhead said: "Blessed with an inimitable blend of passion, humour, dedication and good old Welsh charm, she set about organising fun and engaging events that people would enjoy and raise money in the process."

"It has not been an easy journey, as she became successful some sought to take the reins from her whilst others discouraged her and told her she did not have what it takes to be a



winner in the charity sector.

"Her stoic refusal to give up on her idea or listen to the nay sayers is exactly the sort of resilience we look to inculcate into in our trainees."

Events like the 'Big Pie-In,' 'Plunge the Boss,' 'Santa Splash' and a fundraising ball featuring rock legends Iron Maiden and comedian Rhod Gilbert and hundreds of serving personnel have proved there's fun to be had in the name of a worthy cause.

Mr Fairhead said: "Hayley spoke of her own challenges of coming to terms with harrowing personal events in Iraq and Afghanistan and she became quite emotional as she recalled those who have thanked her for literally, as they put it, saving their lives."

Combat Stress took more than 16,000 calls from distressed personnel last year.

"SERE students are the sorts that volunteer to put themselves in harm's way and are likely to be exposed to operations and post-traumatic stress," said Mr Fairhead.



**WONDER WALL:** Cpl Court signs on at Cranwell SERE centre. Inset left, receiving the Fundraiser of the Year award from Combat Stress in 2023



News

# P-8 U-boat drill

Simon Mander

UK MARITIME surveillance crews are honing their sub-hunting skills alongside the German Navy as Nato prepares to swell numbers of its Poseidon P-8 fleet.

CXX Sqn aircrew and engineers concluded a week-long series of war games from the Naval airbase at Nordholz this month.

Exercises included tracking and targeting a U-33, the German type 212 submarine in the North Sea.

UK P-8 crews rehearsed radar, communications and dummy torpedo-attack runs during the maritime warfare drill.

Germany is expected to begin operating the Poseidon P-8 from October this year, bringing the Nato inventory to more than 30 of the Boeing-built maritime surveillance aircraft.

A CXX Sqn pilot said: "The greatest achievement of the deployment is a British Maritime Patrol Aircraft and crew were briefed by a German Tactical Operations Centre to conduct



**BOARDING PARTY:** CXX Sqn join German Navy on board a U-33 submarine during latest exercise.

a Nato tasking from a German base using a team of British and German engineers."

Germany is part of the Joint Exploration and Discussion

of Initiatives group which sees maritime forces from various countries come together to improve their interoperability with the P-8.

In the spirit of cooperation the Lossiemouth crew presented their hosts with a bottle of their locally-produced Speyside whisky as a memento of the exercise.



## Lifesavers

MEDICS PRACTISED some of the lifesaving skills they will need in responding to international humanitarian crises, from the RAF's biggest base.

Brize Norton's aeromedical evacuation specialists trained with NHS staff as part of Exercise Venture Spirit at Flying Station Aldergrove, near Belfast.

Nine nurses and medics, supported by Critical Care Air Support Team and Infection Prevention Control specialists, took part.

As part of the exercise, personnel were tested in the care and management of a large patient load. The team included an embedded Royal New Zealand medic and reservists from 612 and 4626 Sqs.



- 1ST PRIZE  
£10,000
- 2ND PRIZE  
£3,000
- 3RD PRIZE  
£2,000

## SPORTS LOTTERY



### WHAT WOULD YOU DO WITH OUR £10,000 WEEKLY JACKPOT?

More chances to win, now with up to 6 tickets and still only £1 per ticket! Exclusively open to all serving and former serving RAF personnel.

"The RAF Central Fund continue to provide essential support to Station clubs so that they can get off the ground and maintain their kit and equipment. The Fund has been a key supporter of the Brize Norton Kart Club over the years, providing funding for karts, engines, and tools. Without this funding our club, like many others across the Air Force, would not be as successful as it is, and the team would struggle to compete in championships."

Sgt Robert Small

Support your RAF charity by playing today at:

[www.rafcf.org.uk](http://www.rafcf.org.uk)



RAFCentralFund

BeGambleAware.org

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



# Your pension is for life. Don't neglect it. Join us. Job done.

Your Armed Forces pension is one of the best in the public sector. But to make the most of it, you need to make the best choices at key points in your career. Your personal circumstances may change, influencing those choices, and you need to appreciate various ways in which you can influence the amount you receive when you leave. It's not surprising that the Forces Pensions Consultants at the Forces Pension Society dealt with almost 30,000 enquiries last year. The guidance our experts provide is personalised and access to the team is included in your membership fee.

Your pension is worth a great deal and it would be neglectful to ignore it. Joining the Forces Pension Society will also keep you in touch with changes to tax regimes, ensure you're fully informed about issues with potential retrospective impact (such as McCloud), and also deliver a range of valuable membership benefits at discounted prices.

## Independent, not-for-profit

As an independent not-for-profit organisation, any surplus revenue helps fund our support for the Veterans' Community, our Roadshows and Webinars, our attendance at CTP Employment Fairs plus our vigilance in challenging governments whenever we spot injustice or unfairness in the system. And importantly, we provide the whole military community with a voice that counts on the representative bodies for Armed Forces and Public Sector Pensions.

## Visit: [forcespensionsociety.org/join-now/](https://forcespensionsociety.org/join-now/)

Annual membership for you and your spouse/partner is just **£47**. When you join us, you will have exclusive access to our Forces Pensions Consultants, our informative Members' Webinars and you'll receive our bi-annual e-newsletters and our magazine, Pennant.

You'll also have access to our wide range of membership benefits from discounts on new cars to insurances, including our latest range of travel policies.

## IT PAYS TO UNDERSTAND THE VALUE OF YOUR PENSION

### Forces Pension Society

68 South Lambeth Road, Vauxhall, London SW8 1RL.

T: 020 7820 9988 E: [memsec@forpen.co.uk](mailto:memsec@forpen.co.uk) [www.forcespensionsociety.org](http://www.forcespensionsociety.org)



SCAN ME



# ROYAL AIR FORCE

## RAF News

The Forces Favourite Read

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

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

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

# RAF News

The official voice of the Royal Air Force



# Crew View

## JFCIS (ME)



**Wg Cdr Andrew Stephenson**

“It is an honour and a joy to lead JFCIS (ME) Made up of personnel from across Defence, their professionalism and commitment to the mission leaves me with nothing but pride.”

THE JOINT Force Communications and Information Systems (Middle East) is a Tri-Service unit with personnel based across the Middle East. JFCIS (ME) is also a Whole Force team that in addition to military personnel includes both civil servants



**AS1 Chloe Gibson**

“I have embraced the challenges and found immense satisfaction in operating within a Tri-Service environment during my first deployment.”

and contractors. The mission of JFCIS(ME) is to provide Communication and Information Services to PJHQ-directed operations and activities across the Broader Middle East on behalf of the Chief of Joint Operations.

**AS1(T) Harry Dudley**

“I have really enjoyed my role in JFCIS and being in the Middle East. It has been fantastic working in a Tri-Service team as well as getting to know our NATO allies”



**WO2 Patrick ‘Tez’ Terrett R Sigs**

“This is my first operational tour working alongside a Joint Headquarters. The diverse backgrounds from each Service presents challenge, yet it adds to the overall enjoyment. JFCIS (ME) also provides me with a valuable role as a supervisor within the Royal Signals, overseeing all J6 CIS capabilities in the Joint Operational Area. The position also gives me the chance to travel across the wider Middle East, visiting locations such as Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Cyprus.”



**Sgt David Sparey RAF**

“Working within a Whole Force HQ for the first time has been a challenge, but a welcome one. Learning how the various Services and CONDO personnel differ in their approach to varying scenarios has allowed me to develop and learn better ways to solving issues across the JOA.”



**Cpl Jack Stead RAF**

“I have enjoyed the opportunity to work as part of a Tri-Service team at JFCIS (ME), allowing me to work on a wide array of tasks I wouldn’t normally be exposed to.”



**Lt Joe Dendle RN**

“Working in a Joint Environment and integrating with coalition partners has been a rewarding experience”



**Sgt Nicholas Dry RM**

“I am enjoying the opportunity here at JFCIS (ME) as part of the operational ‘bigger-picture’, and working within a Tri-Service environment to broaden my experience.”



**AS1(T) Oliver Platt**

“During my first deployment as a theatre reserve, I have had the incredible opportunity to travel across the Middle East. This experience has allowed me to collaborate with various nations and Services, significantly expanding my knowledge of different equipment and the rich cultures of other countries.”



Bulletin



**SALUTE:** Lossiemouth personnel joined tribute at Isle of Harris crash site

## Hebrides memorial

**Staff Reporter**  
Lossiemouth

A SHACKLETON crew who died when they crashed into a Scottish hill have been remembered 35 years on.

Personnel from Lossiemouth travelled to the Isle of Harris where the aircraft, callign 'Gambia 08', crashed on an exercise to the Outer Hebrides killing all 10 on board, including the Officer Commanding 8 Sqn at that time.

A memorial service took place at the Free Church of Scotland in Leverburgh, which included a minute's silence at 11.37am, the exact time of the aircraft crash, followed by the laying of a wreath at a memorial.

Some family members of the crash victims attended the ceremony.

# Red Sea drone factory blitzed

**Simon Mander**

**TYPHOONS DROPPED** Paveway IV precision-guided bombs on a suspected Houthi drone factory in a joint operation with US forces, according to details just released.

RAF jets with air refuelling support from Voyager tankers struck after dark when the likelihood of any civilians being in the area was reduced.

Defence Secretary John Healey told the House of Commons: "Our intelligence analysis identified a cluster of buildings – 15 miles south of Sanaa – used by the Houthis to manufacture drones of the type used to attack ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

"RAF Typhoons struck a number of these buildings with Paveway 4 bombs in an action limited, targeted and devised to minimise the risk of civilian life."

He said the sortie was in line with the UN Charter to restore freedom of navigation, degrade Houthi capability and prevent future attacks, reinforce regional security and protect economic security.

Since November 2023, the Houthis have made more than 320 attacks on international shipping in the Red Sea, with some support from Russia.

Mr Healey said Houthi claims that attacking ships was supporting Gaza were untrue as attacks began well before the war began.

An estimated 12 per cent of



**STRIKE:** Typhoons armed with Paveway bombs carried out night raid on Houthi terror targets

global trade and 30 per cent of container traffic passes through the Red Sea every year. The Houthi threat has led to a drastic fall, with levels 55 per cent down on November 2023 with most ships taking a 5,000-mile diversion around the Cape of Good Hope,

adding a fortnight to the journey from Asia to Europe and pushing up prices for British people.

The US has been targeting the Houthis in Yemen, destroying command-and-control centres, air defence systems, weapons manufacturing and storage sites.

As a result, Houthi ballistic missile launches have dropped by 69 per cent and one-way drone attacks have been more than halved.

The joint operation builds on broader support that includes air to air refuelling and the use of the Diego Garcia base.

## Retirement is in the bag for piper Ian

**Simon Mander**

PIPE MAJOR Ian Hughes has retired after more than five decades of RAF service and music.

The bandsman, who has coordinated performances at 17 Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoos, will be dined out as a civilian instructor at Leuchars later this month.

Since signing up in 1969 he has served across the UK and Europe, including the 1990 Gulf War and the Yugoslav conflict, before hanging up his blues as Chief Technician at Leuchars in 1998.

As Senior RAF Pipe Major he has taken bands to Korea, Russia



and Australia and led RAF Pipes and Drums at Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee, Queen Elizabeth II's funeral, King Charles III's Coronation, and the King's Coronation Dedication in Scotland.

## Bros in arms bridge the Gulf

**Staff Reporter**

**BROTHERS-IN-ARMS** ANDREW and Alex Warry joined Forces in the Gulf this month as Brize Norton-based Atlas crews flew in supplies to HMS Lancaster in Bahrain.

The mission gave 23-year-old Cpl Alex the chance to catch up with his elder sibling, sailor Andrew, 30, for the first time since joining the RAF four years ago.

The global transporter is currently on Operations with 83 Expeditionary Air Group in the Gulf while the Navy frigate is deployed providing security to merchant shipping across the Red Sea and intercepting drug and arms smugglers.

The duo narrowly missed each other in Gibraltar during the Covid pandemic, where restrictions prevented them from meeting up.

Both say they were inspired to join up by their grandfather, who served with the Royal Navy.



**FAMILY BUSINESS:** Brize-based Cpl Alex (pictured left) catches up with brother Andrew in Bahrain





**DAY TO REMEMBER:** HM The King shares a joke with Royal British Legion veteran Joy Trew PHOTO: CPL TIM HAMMOND



**HITTING RIGHT NOTE:** The Central Band of the Royal Air Force march down The Mall



**CEREMONIAL DUTIES:** Grenadiers played an important role in the VE Day commemorations in central London



**HEADS UP:** Crowds of people gathered in Whitehall for VE Day commemorations. The Royal Air Force's Red Arrows and Typhoons performed a flypast. PHOTO: CPL SARAH





**WWII ICON:**  
BBMF Lancaster  
was part of flypast

# VE<sup>80</sup> Day

RAF News



**ROYAL FAMILY:** HRH Prince William, Prince George, Prince Louis and Princess Charlotte smile as the procession approaches the Queen Victoria Memorial  
PHOTO: CPL TIM HAMMOND



**CEREMONY:** RAF veteran Alan Kennett about to be presented with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Torch of Peace at the start of the military procession from Parliament Square

## Staff Reporter

**ONLOOKERS CHEERED** as the Red Arrows soared over Buckingham Palace during the 80th anniversary commemorations for Victory in Europe Day, which marked the beginning of the end of WWII.

The Royal Family, including Prince William in his RAF uniform, joined veterans on the Buckingham Palace garden steps to watch a flyover of 23 aircraft types which came together from stations across Britain, joined by spectators on The Mall and millions who watched on television.

And HM The King and The Queen chatted to those who served in WWII (inset).

The flypast was led by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Lancaster bomber, one of only two still flying anywhere in the world, having earlier taken off from RAF Waddington.

The venerable aircraft recalls the wartime sacrifices of Bomber Command and is of the same type used by 617 Sqn in the daring Dambusters raid led by Wg Cdr Guy Gibson VC.

Next came the Brize-based

Voyager, the RAF's biggest aircraft, and the A400M Atlas – which replaced the Hercules as a battlefield workhorse.

Behind them, the C-17 Globemaster, a veteran of operations worldwide, and also from the Oxfordshire base, thundered past.

The fourth wave brought Lossiemouth's P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft, two Typhoon FGR4s, a Rivet Joint surveillance aircraft from Waddington, and two F-35B Lightnings – Britain's latest fast jets.

And bringing the flypast to a dramatic close were the Hawks of the Red Arrows, accompanied by four more Typhoons.

On the ground, RAF Regiment Gunners stood proudly in a guard of honour on Parliament Square.

And there was a reminder of recent conflicts when 11 officers of the Armed Forces of Ukraine on Operation Interflex training in Britain marched past with their national flag flying.

Earlier, 30 Sqn personnel were joined by 99-year-old veteran Dennis Bishop, who served across Europe throughout the war, as they rehearsed their part in the parade over RAF College Cranwell.



**SPECIAL TOUR:** 99-year-old RAF veteran Dennis Bishop, who served across Europe during WWII was invited aboard a 30 Sqn Atlas as crews prepared for the flypast over The Mall. PHOTO: SGT JIMMY WISE



**GUARD OF HONOUR:** RAF Regiment personnel on parade in Parliament Square



# Royal Air Force In Concert

**Lincoln Cathedral VE Day 80**

Band of the Royal Air Force College

Lincoln Cathedral Choir

Compere Melvyn Prior

7.30pm Saturday 17 May 2025

**Princess Alexandra Auditorium, Yarm**

Band of the Royal Air Force College

7.30pm Friday 11 July 2025

**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**

Central Band of the Royal Air Force

7.30pm Friday 3 October 2025

**Terry O'Toole Theatre, Lincoln**

Royal Air Force Swing Wing

7pm Friday 17 October 2025



 **ROYAL AIR FORCE** **Music**  
Charitable Trust

[www.rafmct.uk](http://www.rafmct.uk)





Competition

Win!

# A time never to forget

## Win £350 AVI-8 VE Day watch

ON MAY 8, 1945, the world erupted in celebration as Germany unconditionally surrendered to the Allies, marking the official end of World War II in Europe. The streets flooded with jubilant crowds, Prime Minister Winston Churchill addressed the British nation and the moment became etched in time as Victory in Europe Day – or VE-Day.

Now, eight decades later, leading watchmakers AVI-8 have captured the spirit of this historic triumph in a meticulously designed timepiece collection that pays homage to the aircraft, the pilots and the enduring symbols of victory.



**CASEBACK:**  
Engraved with  
Sir Winston  
Churchill's words

The VE-Day 80<sup>th</sup> Limited Edition collection features three distinctive models, each representing an aircraft that played a pivotal role in WWII: the P-51 Mustang Patriot Automatic, the Spitfire Type 300 Automatic and the Hawker Hurricane Kent Automatic.

Each of the legendary aircraft that inspired these timepieces played a crucial role in securing Allied Air superiority, and their legacy is now intricately woven into the design of this collection.

The watch dials feature a wealth of subtle yet powerful references, ensuring that every detail tells a story.

### Hawker Hurricane

At the heart of each timepiece lies a tribute to the defining moment of VE-Day. On the date wheel, the number 8 is replaced with a bold 'V' – a powerful nod to May 8 and Churchill's iconic 'V for Victory' salute. The dial also features Morse code for the letter V (three dots and a dash) echoing the triumphant message that resonated through radios and telegrams across the globe during the war.

In a further homage to this historic date, the markers at 8 and 5 o'clock are subtly emphasised – symbolizing May 8, 1945. Additionally, on the Hawker Hurricane Kent Automatic and P-51 Mustang Patriot Automatic, the seconds hand is specially designed with a 'V' hand sign.

When the watch is turned over an equally powerful homage is revealed – the caseback is engraved with Churchill's stirring words from his speech on VE Day.

The front of the dial bears the outward-



**SPECIAL:** VE Day  
presentation box

facing 'V' sign, universally recognised as a symbol of victory, while the caseback features the inverted 'V' – a reminder of the struggle and defiance that led to this historic triumph.

Even the strap holds a hidden tribute – on its underside the musical notes of Beethoven's *Symphony No 5* are subtly engraved. Often called the 'Victory Symphony', it famously begins with a motif that mirrors the Morse code for 'V', a theme that became synonymous with the Allied War effort.

### Limited collection

The VE-Day 80<sup>th</sup> Limited Edition collection has robust Japanese automatic movements, a luminous face, sapphire lenses and aviation-inspired design elements – the timepieces serving as both functional tributes and wearable pieces of history.

This fabulous collection, limited to 800 pieces, is a reminder that time never forgets – and neither should we.

Go to: [avi-8.com](http://avi-8.com) for more information.

One lucky reader could be the proud owner of a Hawker Hurricane Kent Automatic VE-Day 80<sup>th</sup> Limited Edition watch AV-4094-06 in Vanguard Beige, rrp £350.

## Win a watch

FOR YOUR chance to win this fantastic prize, enter our competition via the link:

[avi-8.com/pages/raf-news-ve-day-80th-limited-edition-giveaway](http://avi-8.com/pages/raf-news-ve-day-80th-limited-edition-giveaway)

Entries must be received by May 26, 2025 at 11:59PM (London time).

By entering the competition you agree to subscribe to the AVI-8 e-marketing database.



Claim a 25% discount. Go to [avi-8.com](http://avi-8.com) and quote code RAF25





# STONYHURST

AGES 3-18

*Creating* **men & women** *for others*



Forces families pay no more than 10% of the annual CEA allowance.  
7 day full boarding tradition and child centred academic pathway.  
Stonyhurst offers accompanied travel and on-site accommodation  
for visiting forces families.



Scan the QR code  
to book your place



*Open Days* **in March & May**



Co-ed 3-18 | Boarding & Day | Jesuit, Catholic School



[stonyhurst.ac.uk/opendays](https://stonyhurst.ac.uk/opendays)



Air Cdre Andrew Hine OBE

**Obituary**

# Tornado commander

Top Gun  
flew 158  
combat  
patrols  
over Iraq

**AIR CDRE Andrew Hine, who has died of cancer aged 58, was a Tornado pilot who, over a period of 12 years, was deployed to the Persian Gulf region on nine occasions to fly operations and patrols over Iraq in support of United Nations Resolutions, and in the aftermath of the 2003 Iraq War.**

The son of Air Chief Marshal Sir Patrick Hine, the former Commander-in-Chief of RAF Strike Command and the Commander of British Forces during the First Gulf War, Andy was educated at Haileybury School before studying at St Andrew's University, where he graduated with an MA in history.

## RAF Bruggen

He joined the RAF in 1989, trained as a pilot and, after converting on to the Tornado, joined 17 Sqn at RAF Bruggen on the Dutch-German border where, 22 years earlier, his father, then a Wg Cdr, had commanded the squadron when it was equipped with the Phantom.

The squadron was required to always maintain one aircraft on a 15-minute alert state, ready to launch armed with a nuclear weapon. During his time at Bruggen, he deployed to Kuwait twice and patrolled over Iraq in support of a United Nations Resolution forbidding Iraq from flying over the southern part of the country.

In January 1996 he headed for Lossiemouth in Scotland to join 12 Sqn. The RAF had continued to keep detachments of Tornado aircraft in the Gulf region to maintain the patrols and reconnaissance operations over Iraq and, over the next 15 months, Hine returned to the region twice to fly these missions. During this tour he qualified as a weapons instructor (QWI).

In 1997, relations with Iraq had begun to deteriorate as it increased its efforts to breach the United Nations-imposed no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq. Saddam Hussein's



**LOSSIE OC:** The then Gp Capt Andy Hine

regime was also becoming increasingly uncooperative with the UN Special Commission established to supervise the elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction (UNSCOM) and longer-range missiles in the aftermath of the first Gulf War.

Britain decided to strengthen the forces already deployed to the theatre, and in July 1999 Hine, newly-appointed flight commander on 13 Sqn, was deployed to Ali Al Salem air base in Kuwait, commanding a detachment of six Tornados.

Assessed by his squadron commander as "the best pilot on the squadron", he was also its weapons specialist. He pioneered a technique for the use of precision guided weapons and went on to fly some of the most taxing missions in the very high-threat environment. This included planning and leading a daylight offensive against Iraqi surface-to-air missiles (SAM) and anti-aircraft artillery that

was routinely interfering with other RAF Tornados patrolling the southern no-fly zone. On another occasion, his painstaking attention to detail was invaluable during the planning phase of a joint operation with USAF forces, which culminated in the largest single coalition raid against Iraq since the Gulf War.

## Op Telic

After two staff appointments in the Ministry of Defence, Hine was appointed to command No. II (AC) Sqn in November 2005. It was equipped with the up-graded Tornado GR4, a highly capable attack and reconnaissance aircraft with an all-weather capability. In the aftermath of the Iraq War in 2003 (Operation Telic), the RAF maintained squadrons in the area to police Iraqi airspace. Hine flew 28 such sorties from an air base in Qatar, most using air-to-air refuelling and lasting six to seven hours.

At the end of his ninth

detachment to Iraq, he had flown 158 combat patrols involving more than 500 hours of flying. On relinquishing command of the squadron, his station commander commented: "An exceptional tour, as both a squadron pilot and squadron commander." His Air Officer Commanding assessed him as: "a superb front-line commander." His impressive leadership and resourceful management resulted in him being appointed OBE.

When promoted to Gp Capt in 2008, he was posted to the Permanent Joint Headquarters to run the operational plans division. The precision of his analysis and planning for the UK's drawdown in Iraq reflected his depth of awareness, practical intelligence and his meticulous nature and drew high praise from his superiors.

His close association with the Tornado was to continue when, in September 2009, he was appointed to command

Lossiemouth, the RAF's largest and busiest operational base and home to three squadrons of Tornados and an RAF Regiment Wing headquarters.

During his period in command, he prepared his squadrons to deploy to Kandahar in Afghanistan to fly operations where they provided vital reconnaissance, close support and strike capabilities to support ground troops and deter enemy forces.

In addition to his commitments to support operations in Afghanistan, some of his Tornados were used to implement a no-fly zone over Libya to prevent government forces loyal to Muammar Gaddafi from carrying out air attacks on anti-Gaddafi forces. Others flew 3,000-mile strike missions against targets in Libya in what were "the longest-range bombing missions conducted by the RAF since the Falklands crisis."

In addition to these demanding operational commitments, Hine had to oversee a major construction programme to prepare the base for the replacement of the Tornado by the Typhoon fighter. In addition to fulfilling these major tasks, he flew regularly to retain his combat-ready status.

## Afghanistan

His involvement in flying operations continued following his departure from Lossiemouth in May 2012 when he spent four months as the Director of the Combined Air and Space Centre at Al Udeid in Qatar. Air operations were still being conducted over Afghanistan, and he played a key role in the deployment of an unmanned wide-area sensor system to provide a day/night surveillance capability in support of ground forces. In June 2012, his support for the rescue of British aid workers kidnapped in a remote area in Badakshan province in Afghanistan, and his interaction with the embassy in Tajikistan, drew plaudits from the UK Special Forces.

Following his time in Qatar, he was promoted to Air Cdre and took up a new post on the air staff in MOD, where he was responsible for forward planning.

In 2015, Hine decided to leave the RAF and begin a second career as a teacher. He quickly established himself at Oundle School as a schoolmaster whose pupils will never forget him. Quiet and private by nature, he was a highly intelligent thinker, and a man of great integrity and loyalty. Throughout his RAF and teaching careers, his strength of purpose, analytical skills and concern and care for others were always evident and attracted widespread admiration.



# There when you need her



You're always  
ready but is your  
safety net?

In the armed forces you plan for every possibility. But what happens if illness or injury means you or your family need unexpected care?

Lady Grover is there when you need her, helping to cover care costs, so you can stay prepared whatever life throws your way. From just £60 per year.

Join today: [ladygrover.org.uk](https://ladygrover.org.uk)



**Lady Grover**

Armed Forces' Health Support





**GENESIS? NEVER heard of it!** That was a common reaction from members of the public when I was testing the GV70. Nevertheless, everybody wanted to talk about it.

Its rear lights have a hint of Merc about them, while the nose and badge are a bit, dare I say it, Bentley Bentayga. At least, a shrunk-down version. Either way, it's an impressive looking wagon, for sure.

For those of you who don't know, Genesis is the posh branch of Hyundai-Kia, a relationship akin to Lexus and Toyota. The brand's been on sale in the UK since 2021, but has largely slipped under the radar. Surprising really, because the GV70 is just one of several brilliant models. Nevertheless, the low-profile does give the brand an air of mystery and exclusivity.

It's an expensive looking SUV, with an imposing grille, a nicely detailed bonnet and sleek lights. The profile features swooping lines and a genuinely innovative design around the windows.

Genesis has spent a lot of time and effort getting this car looking right. The end result is a machine that looks sleek and powerful, all the more so thanks to the huge twin exhausts. Fortunately, it's reasonably priced, however, from £41,475.

#### Inside

The GV70's interior design is unusual and it's a very nice place to be. The driving position is well judged, with excellent levels of adjustment, and the seats are wonderfully comfortable nappa leather. The Comfort Seat pack adds a massage function.

There's plenty of space up front and the cabin feels airy. Leg room in the rear isn't groundbreaking, especially if you're sitting behind a lanky six-footer like me, but it's not cramped either. You get 542 litres of space in the boot with the rear seats in place.

The finish is of a high standard and everything looks suitably expensive, certainly at a glance. It's only when you take the time to look closely at the detail that you notice a few drawbacks – such as the 'leather' trim being obviously fake in places.

Behind the steering wheel there's an 8.0-inch dial display as



# The posh Hyundai/Kia

standard, but you can upgrade to an impressive 12.3-inch digital display with 3D-effect dials. These are always incredibly sharp and easy to read, eerily so. That's because the car is watching you and adjusting the display to match your viewing angle. Genius!

You also get a head-up display, wireless phone charging and Hyundai's exceptionally helpful 'Blind-Spot View Monitor' that brings up an image of your blind spot in place of either the speedo or rev counter when indicating.

The infotainment system is operated by a 14.5-inch touchscreen, with high-definition graphics. It's clear, quick and intuitive. It can also be controlled by a clickwheel, mounted on the transmission tunnel, which is great for use on the move.

There is one slight problem, however. The infotainment wheel and the rotary gear selector are literally an inch apart, so you find yourself going for reverse and engaging Radio 2.... It's surprisingly annoying.

There's Android Auto and Apple CarPlay as standard, as well as a separate climate control panel in its own nicely designed

## Genesis GV70

#### Pros

- Looks expensive
- Well equipped
- Well priced

#### Cons

- Engine can sound gruff
- Rear space little limited
- Not most economical

#### Verdict

The Genesis GV70 is a stylish SUV, with upmarket charisma. The huge front

grille may be plastic, rather than chrome, but it certainly looks the part and the car has a lot going for it. It looks good, is well equipped, comes with a long warranty and is competitively priced. It also has one of the most luxurious interiors in its class, if you ignore the odd faux bits. All in all, a cracking SUV that's well worth a test-drive.

section of the dash. That's more like it Genesis, carry on.

#### On The Road

Let's be specific here, our test car was the 2.5-litre petrol ICE variant, with a starting price of £44,100, on the road. Our car, with all the whistles and bells, came to £57,375 and, at that, you had all the luxury you could wish for.

In terms of performance, you're looking at 300bhp and 311lb ft of torque, delivered efficiently to all four wheels. 0-62mph is achieved in a

respectable 6.1 seconds, topping out at 149mph. Fuel economy isn't where the GV70 leads the field, hitting 39 mpg at its most frugal. In real terms you'll only get around 30mpg, if you're driving gently.

The engine has plenty of pep but it isn't the most refined four-cylinder on the market. It can sound a little coarse under harsh acceleration, but Genesis has thought about this and pumped a meatier engine sound into the cabin, through the speakers. It's a con, but it works.

The eight-speed auto gearbox is smooth and performs well when you're bimbly gently. When you ask it to respond to a sudden call for power, that's where it falls down slightly. The auto downchange needs to be far sharper, in my book. Flick it into manual and drive it off the paddles, job done.

Our Luxury Line car came with 21-inch alloys as standard, and they looked stunning. They also provided good levels of grip and the GV70 was easy to thread through the bends. It is a heavy car though, so it does have a tendency to lean like a big SUV and isn't particularly suited to sudden changes of direction. That said, the steering builds up weight nicely and it's accurate enough for confident navigation of country roads.

It rides reasonably well and uses the same 'Road Preview' scanning tech that you'll find in its big brother, the GV80. This reads the road ahead and sets up the adaptive dampers to tackle approaching potholes and imperfections. Clever!

Road noise is well subdued, even with the big wheels, and you'd have to be pretty picky, with excellent hearing, to complain about wind noise.







EMPLOYER  
RECOGNITION  
SCHEME

GOLD AWARD

★ Trustpilot



4.7

Reviews 5,624

# WiFi for the RAF

Private internet access to browse, stream and game  
at your air base and 150 MOD sites

- ✓ Flexible subscriptions – pause up to twice a year
- ✓ Unlimited data
- ✓ Unfiltered content



Connect to **Wifinity PAYG**  
or visit [wifinity.co.uk/get-online](https://wifinity.co.uk/get-online)

**wifinity**



# Life is just Grand for Amy

## Four Slams in row for her Red Roses

### RUGBY UNION

#### Daniel Abrahams

IT PROVED to be an historic and successful women's Six Nations tournament for RAF rugby union stars Flt Lt Amy Cokayne and Fg Off Sarah Bonar.

The Red Roses' single point 43-42 win over France at the Allianz Stadium, Twickenham, saw Cokayne come off the bench to help John Mitchell's side hold on for victory to secure their fourth consecutive Grand Slam and seventh title in a row, but also to win her 83rd cap.

While Bonar (*inset below*) saw her Scotland team beat third-placed Ireland 26-19 at the DAHM Health Stadium in Edinburgh to secure nine points in the championship, just one behind Italy in fourth.

Cokayne said: "Helping England secure a Grand Slam victory against France at Twickenham was an incredible experience.

"That single-point margin shows just how competitive women's rugby has become at international level. I was particularly moved by the tremendous support from the crowd, especially seeing my RAF 'family' there cheering me on.

"Their presence means the world to me and bridges my two passions."

The win saw the Red Roses remain unbeaten over their five games, amassing 28 points, but the hosts were given a fright

by Les Bleus. Having led by 24-7 after 20 minutes in front of a crowd of 37,573, England went in 31-21 at the break, before a back and forth second half eventually saw the hosts triumph.

Following a nail-biting clash which saw Scotland trail only to win with a last-minute try in front of a partisan Edinburgh crowd, Bonar said: "I am pleased to finish the tournament on a high, getting that win against a physical Irish outfit. We were disappointed with our first-half performance against England [59-7], so we were keen to rewrite some wrongs.

"The girls have some switch-off time now and then we come back together in June and start our World Cup preparations."

The international pairing helped carry out training sessions for Sgt Sian Williams' charges ahead of the opening Inter-Services win over the Royal Navy, 36-10 at Franklin Gardens, home of Premiership champions Northampton Saints.

Of the upcoming IS championship's finale, Cokayne said: "I'm now fully focused on recovering from a few niggles to put me in the best shape to contribute to the Inter-Services game against the Army at Kingsholm."

That game, in Gloucester, is on May 17. Tickets, from £5 for U16s and £17 for adults, are available from [eticketing.co.uk/gloucesterrugby/EDP/Event/Index/160](http://eticketing.co.uk/gloucesterrugby/EDP/Event/Index/160).



**WINNING FEELING:** Cokayne, above right, helps Red Roses to victory against France

## Magnificent seven tries for RAF Blue Lightnings

### RUGBY LEAGUE

LIGHTNING STRUCK seven times as the women's rugby league team RAF Blue Lightnings crushed Anglian Vipers 34-4 to close out their two-day spring training camp.

The camp at Cranwell ended with a trip to Wymondham Rugby Club in Norfolk, home of East Rugby League Premier Division side the Anglian Vipers.



Head coach FS Maxwell Green said: "There were seven tries from seven different try

scorers, crunching hits and powerful runs, with every player doing themselves proud."

The Lightnings began with an experienced 13 in a strong squad of 21, but both sides got off to a shaky start. Settling down first, the aviators got into their rhythm, putting in some big tackles and powerful runs.

The Service side went on to score three unanswered tries before the break: one from short range, a full-pitch try, followed by a brute force run-in – with two of the three conversions

making the score 16-0.

The Lightnings scored another close-range effort just after the restart, before another long-range score, followed by two close-range tries for the magnificent seven.

The hosts took until the 79th minute to beat the Lightnings' defence, scoring from two metres out, with the final whistle sounding as the missed conversion sailed wide.

**Would you like to see your sport featured in RAF News? Send a short report (max 300 words) and a couple of photographs (attached hi-res jpegs) to: [Sports@rafnews.co.uk](mailto:Sports@rafnews.co.uk)**





# **RAF News**

The Forces Favourite Read

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

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

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

**RAF News**  
The official voice of the Royal Air Force



## ANGLING

# 'Top rod' Loz the man in mirror

## Disney thriller for Corporal

**Daniel Abrahams**

THE FIRST of RAF Carp Angling Association's development events proved a fresh-faced thrill ride as the Service's newest fly fishermen put on a show at Norton Disney.

The nine-angler face-off was at the prestigious Midlands venue, with 10-acre Hodgetts Lake – stocked with 1,000 carp – booked for the event.

RAF Carp Angling Association spokesman Sgt Lloyd Moore said: "We hold five league matches up and down the country in the season, it can prove difficult for an angler to introduce themselves to the team or look for advice in such a daunting setting.

"In order to tackle this we also host development events

each year to promote the sport and give all anglers an opportunity to get some mentoring in a relaxed setting.

"This is the perfect time for such an event, it is an exciting time of year to get out on the bank, with the fish moving around freely and in the search for food.

"The league matches can be very competitive but the development events are more relaxed, with small prizes up for grabs for, first fish caught, biggest fish caught and the largest total weight of fish caught."

Cpl Loz Howard claimed highest total weight of fish with 171lb 10oz for his 10 catches, while FS Jim Thomas managed to hook the biggest specimen – a

mirror carp weighing 25lb 02oz.

Howard's catch-fest came after coaching from RAF team member Sgt Dave Jones.

Sgt Stuart Jepson from Cranwell, landed the event's first fish, followed by two further catches.

After a quiet night and a little rain in the morning the second day quickly warmed up and fish started to come out around the

lake to multiple swims. Cpl Dan Smith found himself borrowing a net from the team Captain Stu Thomson, as all three of his rods, all trying different approaches, went in quick succession, resulting in three fish on the bank all at once.

Moore added: "We have RAF Carp Angling team personnel spread across most RAF stations

and some Tri-Service locations, so any personnel wanting to learn more, please get in touch.

"We have two further development events planned for the year, plus we have our league competition and the ever-popular RAF Carp Championship at the end of the year."

● Follow the association @RAF\_Carp on Instagram.



**HEAVY WEIGHT:**  
Cpl Loz Howard had largest catch total



**NET GAINS:** (l-r) Sgt Stuart Jepson landed first fish, Cpl Dan Smith caught three at the same time and FS Jim Thomas with the event's biggest specimen



**EXPERT:** AS1(T) Thomas Stegeman (left) was second in Margam Park cross-country event

## CYCLING

## National success for mountain bikers

THE SERVICE'S mountain bikers rounded off their visit to Port Talbot in Wales with second and third-place podium finishes from two days of action at Margam Park.

Racing in round two of the Lloyds National Cross-Country Series in the Expert Category, Cpl Sarah Toms was joined by AS1(T) Thomas Stegeman, while WO Adey Hoyle raced in the masters 50 event, with Toms coming third and Stegeman



**THIRD:** Cpl Sarah Toms (right) on podium

second. Hoyle crashed on one of the course's gravel descents.

Toms said: "The racing was held over a warm weekend which provided one challenge, while the course itself was one for the climbers with 750ft of ascent, with the course held over a three-mile lap.

"It also featured a couple of technical descents for a bit of thrill. Between the gritted teeth and sweat there were great views over South Wales and the event provided a great community for riders."



## Sport

SEA ANGLING

# Haul of the cods



## Valhalla is heavenly for RAF sea anglers

### Daniel Abrahams

AN UNUSUAL array of catches and a spot of moose watching were among the highlights of Exercise Valhalla in Norway for 12 members of the RAF Sea Angling Association.

The expedition to Skarnsundet was designed to develop anglers' skill sets in cold Norwegian waters.

The area, according to association spokesman FS Scott Rennie, "presented the chance of catching fish in sizes and species you simply can't catch in the UK, and this trip did not disappoint".

Targeting big coal fish and cod, which proved difficult to come by, anglers did hook rock fish, lumb, black mouth dog fish, red fish and velvet belly lanternsharks.

While FS Noel Dilnot hooked the biggest fish of the expedition, an 18lb 10oz pollock, a sea trout proved a memorable catch for Sgt Lee Brackenbury, with a big bright orange rock fish being caught in the Trondheim fjord by Chf Tech Curt Hohmann.

Rennie said: "Our target species proved harder to find. It was our hope that the dates we had selected for the trip

**EYE, EYE:** Chf Tech Curt Hohmann poses for the camera with his striking rock fish

would match the annual herring migration, meaning better fishing.

"This year however the migration occurred two to three weeks early resulting in a lot of

**MY DING A LING:** FS Noel Dilnot, above, with his catch of a ling

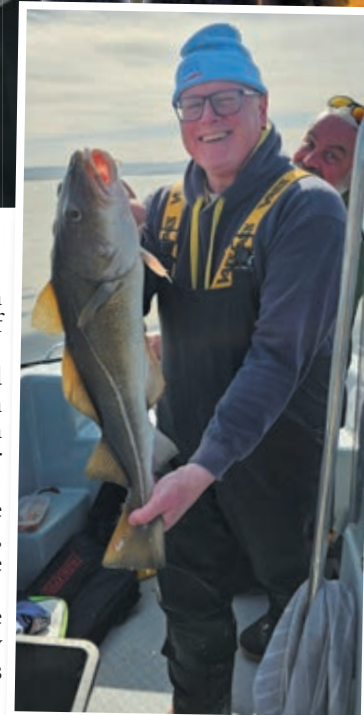
the bigger predatory fish following the herring out of the fjords and back to sea.

"Shore fishing for cod proved more successful with a good haul of eating-sized fish – 5lb to 10lb – and a few larger ones.

"Other highlights of the trip included moose spotting, the Northern Lights and the incredible scenery."

Rennie added: "All the personnel were an exemplary reflection of RAF core values throughout.

"I look forward to reporting on Exercise Valhalla 26."



**THE CODFATHER:** FS Scott Rennie



**THAT CAPS IT:** WO Mark East lands a pollock



**SHORE THING:** Sgt Lee Brackenbury with a magnificent cod



## CRICKET

# Day at Lord's for RAF IS cricketers



SEASON HIGHLIGHT: Action from last year's event at the Home of English Cricket

THE SUMMER of Service sport officially kicks off with the T20 Armed Forces Cricket Festival at Lord's on May 22.

Men's captain Flt Lt Adam Fisher said the aviators are gunning to wrestle the title from the Royal Navy holders. "It's a privilege and honour to represent the RAF at the Home of Cricket. It's a huge perk of being a Serviceman," he said.

"Personally, getting to witness the pride of teammates walking out for the first time is very special."

The day's action starts with the now annual UKAFCA women's clash versus the MCC, before the Royal Navy face the winners of the RAF/Army game.

The tournament's opening clash will be played between the RAF and Army at Utilita Bowl,

Southampton on May 20.

Fisher added: "As a group we're really enjoying the T20 season and excited for what is still to come."

"The T20 IS is always a high-quality competition and Lord's always brings the best out of the Services' cricketers."

"We're happy with the form that the squad has been showing and I'm confident we will enter the competition with a very competitive group."

"We know we have the quality to win the tournament but there are two other Services with the same mindset. It should be a great day."

Tickets are £20 for adults; £10 for serving personnel, veterans and MOD Civil Servants; and £5 for over 65s and under 16s.

● Visit: [lords.org](https://lords.org) for full ticket details and sales.

## BOXING

## Boxers hitting their peak

SERVICE BOXERS are swapping three-minute rounds in the ring for the National 3 Peaks Challenge to raise funds for RAFA later this month.

The team of 12 members of the RAF Boxing Association are aiming to complete the challenge in less than 24 hours on May 17.

Members of the association have already taken part in two 50-hour Christmas fun runs for the charity.

Association spokesman Sgt Ben Baily said: "We are stepping up the difficulty as we take on 23 miles of hiking, 3408m of elevation and 450 miles of driving,

all within 24 hours.

"This is the first time the association has taken this challenge on as we continue to push physical and mental boundaries in support of RAFA."

"RAFA supports RAF Boxing every year with a healthy amount of sponsorship and support, alongside all the fantastic work they do to support the wider RAF family. So, it is only fitting that we take the opportunity to return that backing."

"Any help personnel could give us with sponsorship would be gratefully appreciated."

To sponsor the team, scan the QR code here.



## CLIMBING



HIGH-CLIMBER: Flt Lt Isaac Webber (RAF Waddington), winner of the Open Male Lead PHOTOS: AS2 BEN WEBB

# Rock and Awe

## Daniel Abrahams

AWESOME CLIMBING skills graced the Awesome Walls venue in Sheffield as the Mountaineering Association held its annual Festival of Climbing Championships.

The event saw personnel battle it out for eight awards, starting with Top Rope Novice and Proficient, won by Flt Lt Abby Christen and AS1 Matt Huckle respectively, and ending with the RAF Station award going to Brize Norton.

RAFMA chair, Wg Cdr Mark Hill, said: "The RAF Climbing championships have once again proven to be a resounding success, bringing together an exceptional field of athletes in a celebration of skill, determination and camaraderie. The level of competition was truly outstanding, matched only by the sportsmanship and mutual support demonstrated throughout."

"Events like these not only highlight the technical and physical demands of climbing, but also its profound mental health benefits — building resilience, focus and confidence in all who take part."

The event featured established climbers and debutants, with a strong turnout from RAF station climbing clubs and University Air Squadrons (UAS).

The day featured a programme of competition climbing open to all levels and abilities, on a range of routes across top rope, lead and bouldering disciplines and focused training sessions.

Hill added: "With a busy year-round programme



LEADING LADY: RAFMA Chair Wg Cdr Mark Hill congratulates Flt Lt Bex Capewell on her 1st place win in the Female Lead category

of meets, competitions and expeditions both in the UK and overseas, RAFMA offers opportunities for climbers of all abilities — from indoor competitions to Alpine and Himalayan expeditions. Membership is open to all serving RAF personnel, veterans and dependants."

● Visit: [rafmountaineer.com](https://rafmountaineer.com) for more information on RAFMA.



# 5 RAF Sport

pages of



**Another Grand Slam for our Amy**

See page 23



**Angler Scott's the cod father**

See page 26

## KARTING



**MARHAM MOTOR:**  
Cpl Will Wiltshire drives kart 40

# Kart king Ling joins the Premier league



**PLEASED AS PUNCH:**  
Flt Lt Ling

### Daniel Abrahams

**THE 2025 UK Armed Forces karting season kicked off with a thrilling day of action at the Llandow Circuit in Wales and an RAF one-two of podium finishes.**

It was the perfect start for Flt Lt James Ling, who picked up the first Premier win of the season, finishing under a second ahead of Army driver George Moret and civilian Jack Twilley in a photo finish.

Brize Norton's AS1(T) Joshua Milne was the next Forces driver to cross the line, meaning he sits third in the military championship, with the Army's Toby Knight unable to start the race due to mechanical issues suffered during qualifying earlier in the day.

In the first endurance race of the season, British Army kart 7 recovered from a poor qualifying session to win the race despite starting in 28th.

A strong RAF contingent followed the Army kart to the finish line with racers from RAF Wyton and RAF Benson completing the podium.

The second endurance event had more civilian racers involved, with Monkey Motorsport taking first and second before RAF Leeming's kart 23 came in third.

That finish meant Leeming won the military race from RAF Marham and the Army, near the top of the standings.

The kart fraternity move on to Clay Pigeon Raceway in Dorchester for round two on May 24. **● Follow RAF karting on Instagram @raf\_motorsports.**



**GRIDLOCK:** Karts pack start line before a race

ISSN 0035-8614



9 770035 861068

18

## Climbers in Awesome display

See page 27



# R'n'R

**Win!**



Win top WWII title  
● See page 5

## Motorhome Marilyn – Michelle Collins stars

● See  
page 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





## Exhibitions

### Wes Anderson: The Archives

The Design Museum, Nov 21, 2025 to July 26, 2026

**TRACY'S PUPPET:**  
From *Isle of Dogs*. Arch  
Model Studio. Photo  
Richard Round-Turner  
© The Design Museum

# The Grand exhibition

**FILM GENIUS:**  
Wes Anderson.  
© Searchlight  
Pictures/Photo:  
Charlie Gray



**PINK PALACE:** The Grand Budapest Hotel  
© Thierry Stefanopoulos – La Cinémathèque française

**T**HE FIRST-ever retrospective of renowned filmmaker Wes Anderson will be staged in a major exhibition at the Design Museum, London.

Hundreds of items from his films will be on display in *Wes Anderson: The Archives*, opening on November 21 and running until July 26, 2026.

Anderson's best-known movies include *The Royal Tenenbaums*, *The Darjeeling Limited*, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, *Isle of Dogs*, *The French Dispatch* and *Asteroid City*. He won the Oscar for Best Live Action Short Film in 2024 for *The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar*.

The monumental candy-pink model of the Grand Budapest Hotel – that was used to capture the building's façade for the 2014 film – will be one of the largest and most recognisable items in the exhibition. Spanning more than three metres in width, the model will be one of over 600 objects on display which will collectively illustrate Anderson's meticulous craft of filmmaking.

Across the exhibition, items will range from original storyboards, Polaroids, sketches, and famed costumes worn by much-loved characters, to stop-motion puppets, miniature models, paintings, props and even Anderson's handwritten notebooks.

A spokesperson for the Design Museum said: "The Museum has been granted unprecedented access to Wes Anderson's extensive archives, which the filmmaker has painstakingly built up over three decades. This will be the very first time the majority of these objects have been publicly displayed in Britain."

"Through these unique objects, the exhibition will chart the evolution of Anderson's films from his first short and feature films in the 1990s, up to his most recent productions. The show will follow a



**BOY WITH APPLE:** By Johannes Van Hoytl  
The Younger. Artist: Michael Taylor. 2014.  
From *The Grand Budapest Hotel*

broadly chronological survey of his career, with each section dedicated to one of his films."

Exhibition highlights include the vending machines from *Asteroid City* and *Boy with Apple*, the 'priceless Renaissance portrait' that is unexpectedly inherited by Ralph Fiennes' character Gustave H in *The Grand Budapest Hotel*.

Johanna Agerman Ross, Chief Curator at the Design Museum and co-curator of *Wes Anderson: The Archives*, said: "It is an absolute gift that, even as a young filmmaker, Wes Anderson had the vision and foresight to save all his props and beautifully-crafted objects for his own archive. We are thrilled to be the first to fully dive into the archive's full riches."

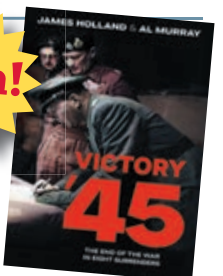
● **Go to:** [designmuseum.org](https://designmuseum.org) for more information and to book tickets.



## Books

**Victory '45/Cassino '44**  
[penguin.co.uk](https://penguin.co.uk)

**Win!**



## Win top WWII titles

**M**ARKING THE 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, *Victory '45* (published by Bantam, [penguin.co.uk](https://penguin.co.uk)) the much-anticipated new title by James Holland and Al Murray, tells the story of the extraordinary summer when the greatest conflagration the world had ever known drew to a close after eight surrenders – six in Europe and two in Japan – that heralded the Allied victory.

After six long years of brutal fighting, in the summer of 1945 with Germany crushed and Japan's cities in ruins, the Axis Powers conceded defeat.

Worldwide, from northern Germany to the Italian Alps and to Tokyo, their leadership ordered the fighting to cease and signed the documents of surrender.

Comprised of 12 chapters based around each of those surrenders and the following celebrations, *Victory '45* reveals stories and perspectives behind the end of the war that have never been told before. Each chapter follows the viewpoints of a number of key characters as they traverse these world-changing events – from ordinary Servicemen and women and civilians to general and political leaders.

The book also considers what took place during the negotiations of those surrenders and the terms agreed, and shows how they determined the directions the participating countries would take in the years following, ultimately forming the shape of the current world.

Holland is an award-winning historian,

writer and broadcaster and co-founder of the annual Chalke Valley History Festival. Murray is the award-winning creator of comic character The Pub Landlord and the author of the recent bestseller *Arnhem: Black Tuesday*. They host the popular WWII podcast *We Have Ways of Making You talk*.

*Victory '45* is their first book together and one lucky reader can win a signed copy.

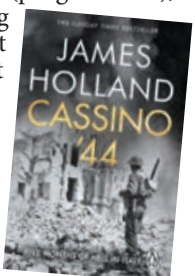
To be in with a chance of winning it, tell us: **What is the name of the podcast hosted by Holland and Murray?**

Email your answer, marked *Victory '45* book 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 May 30.

WE ALSO have copies of the new paperback edition of Holland's bestseller *Cassino '44, Five Months of Hell In Italy* ([penguin.co.uk](https://penguin.co.uk)), described as the astonishing story of one of the most brutal and hardest-fought battles of WWII in Italy – the four ferocious Allied assaults on Monte Cassino, involving troops from six continents and lasting five months.

To win a copy, tell us: **What is the name of the history festival James Holland co-founded?**

Email or post your answer, marked *Cassino '44* competition, to our usual addresses (see above) to arrive by May 30.







**Theatre**  
**Motorhome Marilyn**  
Edinburgh Fringe, July 30-August 25



WANNABE: Michelle Collins as Motorhome Marilyn PHOTO: MICHAEL WHARLEY

# Michelle's bargain basement Marilyn

MICHELLE COLLINS (best known for playing Cindy Beale in *EastEnders*) is to make her Edinburgh Festival Fringe debut.

The soap star will be appearing in *Motorhome Marilyn*, a dark comedy by Ben Weatherill, from July 30 to August 25 (except August 13), that was inspired by Michelle's real-life encounters with a woman known as 'Motorhome Marilyn'.

It follows Denise, an aspiring actress with an obsessive relationship with Marilyn Monroe, hoping to live up to the icon's fame and beauty. In the 1980s she heads to Hollywood, but, as her dreams falter, she is forced to confront the painful truth of unfulfilled aspirations.

The play reveals the toll of living in the shadow of an icon, exploring failure, ageing and the heartbreaking cost of unattained dreams.

Michelle said: "I am thrilled to be making my Edinburgh Festival Fringe debut with *Motorhome Marilyn*, a wonderful new play which is dark, funny and so close to my heart. When I encountered the show's real-life namesake out in LA, I couldn't have imagined that journey



would lead me to this point. I can't wait to share this story with Edinburgh audiences this summer."

Michelle has enjoyed a career spanning over four decades as an actress, producer, and creator. Apart from *EastEnders* she has appeared in *Coronation Street*, *Doctor Who*, *Miss Marple*, *Two Thousand Acres of Sky*, *Sunburn*, *Real Women*, *Death in Paradise*, and *The Last Detective*. She won an international Emmy for her portrayal of Marigold in *The Illustrated Mum*.

Ben is a writer from the East Midlands. His most recent play, *Frank and Percy*, starred Ian McKellen and Roger Allam and played to sold out audiences across the UK and in London. He is currently writing an episode of Series 15 of the BBC series *Death in Paradise*.

*Motorhome Marilyn* will be playing *Downstairs* at the Gilded Balloon. Go to: [tickets.gildedballoon.co.uk](https://tickets.gildedballoon.co.uk) for booking details.

**TV FAVOURITE:**  
*EastEnders'*  
Michelle Collins



**Theatre**  
**An Inspector Calls**  
National tour

# There's still a Priestley's In

## Daldry's production has scooped 19 major awards

STEPHEN DALDRY'S multi-award-winning National Theatre production of JB Priestley's classic *An Inspector Calls* is continuing its national tour.

It stars Tim Treloar (*Richard II*, RSC) as Inspector Goole, alongside Jackie Morrison (*Dirty Dancing*, *Dominion Theatre*) as Mrs Birling, Jeffrey Harmer (*Bird Song*, *Original Theatre Company*) as Mr Birling, Tom Chapman (*Cymbeline*, RSC) as Gerald Croft, Leona Allen as Sheila Birling, George Rowlands as Eric Birling and Alice Darling as Edna.

When Inspector Goole arrives unexpectedly at the prosperous Birling family home, their peaceful dinner party is shattered by his investigations into the death of a young woman. His startling revelations shake the very foundations of their lives.

Daldry is an award-winning theatre, film and television director and producer. He has directed award-winning theatre productions for London's West End and New York's Broadway, including *Billy Elliot*, as well as six feature films, all nominated for major industry awards.

He was executive producer on Netflix's *The Crown* and directed

the last episode.

Since 1992, Daldry's seminal production of *An Inspector Calls* has won 19 major awards, including four Tonys and three Oliviers, and has played to more than five million theatregoers worldwide.

He revealed that when he was first asked to direct the play for the York Theatre back in 1989, in a previous production, he wasn't sure about it.

"It was pretty much a staple of amateur theatre companies at the time. It took some time of researching Priestley, where he wrote it, why he wrote it, where it was first performed, how it was first performed, before I realised that it was much more of a radical piece than it had become known as," he explained.

"JB himself was a little uninspired by the original London production in 1946. It had originally been done in two theatres in Moscow, and those productions were quite radical. So I tried to bring it back to his radical roots and tried to do production which I thought JB might be more interested in."

Priestley died in 1984 and, sadly, Daldry never got to meet him.

He said: "But I was lucky enough to meet Jacquetta Hawkes, who was his wife and a very famous



UNEXPECTED 'GUEST': Tim Treloar as Insp

archaeologist. I went to see her and talked her through this production, and got her blessing. I did say to her at the time - I'm trying to do a production which reveals the play as it was meant to be written, and do tell me if you think I've gone off beam. And she loved it."

He added: "Tom Priestley, his son, was involved in this production from the very early days. Tom was a great friend to the show, and to me. We talked him through it almost every time, in terms of casting, and Tom would always come and see how it was doing. I felt incredibly supported by Tom. But it was because Jacquetta supported the production, I think, that I carried on."

This production has toured almost every year since 1992. Did Daldry imagine at the time that it could be a long runner?

"Not at all," he said. "It was originally programmed for quite a short run at the National, and then they had a tour booked. I think there was a certain nervousness at the National about what I was doing. We had some leading actors of the day in the show, Barbara



BIG HIT: Show's Leona Allen as Sheila Birling in *An Inspector Calls*



# a call for inspector



Inspector Goole and, inset below right, in rehearsals with award-winning producer Stephen Daldry

Leigh-Hunt and Richard Pasco, for example, who were not to be revealed straightaway. It was quite – it is still quite – a demanding show for the actors.

“I think there was a nervousness about a radical reworking of a classic. But in the end, it all worked fine. And then it just carried on – we transferred it and transferred it again. I can’t remember off the top of my head how many West End theatres we’ve been in, but quite a few.”

He added: “When we first performed it, it was very much in the world of Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government, and Thatcher herself was saying there’s no such thing as society, there’s only men and women and families, and so this was, in a sense, a broadside against that mentality and against that Edwardian idea.

“The original idea of the production was to have a conversation between three time zones – [it’s set in 1912], Priestley was writing it in 1944-45. It was about trying to create a social debate. There was a Labour government almost inevitably coming in, but the

conversation in 1945, about what kind of society we wanted after the war, what is Britain, what sort of society do we want to be a part of now, was very current and very important for JB, who himself was an MP. He stood for the Common Wealth Party; essentially a socialist independent.

“That conversation still feels as current today as it did when we first did the play in ’92 and, indeed, when JB first wrote the play in the great Labour landslide of 1945.”

● Go to: [nationaltheatre.org.uk](http://nationaltheatre.org.uk) for tour details.



## Books

**Fire and Fury**  
[augustbooks.co](http://augustbooks.co)

**Win!**

## Was Bomber Command right?

**D**URING WORLD War II, American and British air forces dropped nearly two million tons of bombs on Germany. They destroyed 60 cities, killed more than half a million German citizens, and left 80,000 aircrew dead.

The Head of RAF Bomber Command, Sir Arthur ‘Bomber’ Harris (pictured right), vowed to flatten the nation’s cities one after another ‘like pulling teeth’. The US Air Force, meanwhile, pursued a different strategy in Europe: precision bombing of critical infrastructure.

But which was more effective? Did the carpet bombing of cities actually impact the course of the conflict? Could the war have ended months earlier if bombing missions had focused on key industrial targets instead?

In *Fire and Fury* (augustbooks.co), reissued this month to coincide with the 80th anniversary year of the end of World War II, acclaimed historian Randall Hansen draws together the records of the Allied air forces as well as accounts of the German citizens who lived



through the raids. He explores the differences between the American and British bomber campaigns, and their impact, in a clear-eyed and wide-ranging work.

The book has been described as perfect for fans of Max Hastings, James Holland and Antony Beevor.

Hansen holds a Research Chair at the University of Toronto. Previously, he was director of the Centre for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies and Research

Director of the Joint Initiative on German and European Studies. He has had visiting fellowships at the Institute of Contemporary History, Berlin, the Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna, the Free University of Social Studies, Rome, Trinity College, Dublin and the Department of History, UCLA.

Before taking up his current position, he was a Tutorial Fellow in Politics at Merton College, Oxford. He is author of *Disobeying Hitler: German Resistance in the Last Year of WWII*, also published by August Books.

You could win a copy of *Fire and Fury*. For your chance to own one, tell us:

**Who was the Head of RAF Bomber Command during WWII?**

Email your answer, marked Fire and Fury book 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 May 30.



## Theatre

**Carly Paoli and Friends**  
Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, July 13

## From Mansfield to Broadway

**C**ARLY PAOLI, the Mansfield-born soprano of British/Italian heritage who was described by the late Pope Francis as having “the voice of an angel”, is set to make her West End solo stage debut with a special concert this summer featuring Italian singing legend Al Bano and American Gospel tenor David Phelps.

*Carly Paoli and Friends – Hollywood to Broadway*, will be at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane for one night only – on July 13. The internationally-acclaimed soprano, celebrated for her performances across opera, classical and crossover genres, has sung alongside Andrea Bocelli, José Carreras and Elaine Page and she has performed at the Roman Forum, the London Palladium and even the Vatican.

The event is described as an unforgettable evening of song, storytelling, vocal brilliance and dance, celebrating the great anthems of film and musical theatres. As well as singing solo, Carly will also be duetting with her two guest performers Bano and Phelps.



**SOLO WEST END DEBUT:** Carly Paoli will also duet with Al Bano (above)



She said: “This concert is a dream come true. To perform songs I love, with artists I so deeply admire, in one of the world’s most iconic theatres – it’s something I will cherish forever.”

Bano, one of Italy’s most celebrated musical icons who has sold more than 25 million records during his career, will perform two of his most beloved classics: *Nel Sole* and *Caruso*.

Phelps, known for his three-octave range and emotive delivery, will perform the soaring ballads *Somewhere* from *West Side Story* and *The Impossible Dream*. Carly worked with David on her album *Carly Paoli and Friends* when they duetted on *I Believe*.

● Go to: [lwtheatres.co.uk/whats-on/carly-paoli/](http://lwtheatres.co.uk/whats-on/carly-paoli/) for ticket details.





## Your Announcements

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

### Deaths

**FS** Harry Dennis Aldwinckle BEM J4138979 passed peacefully on April 28. He served as an RAF Supplier, 1953 to 1980, in Cyprus, Bahrain, Singapore and Malaysia as well as UK Units Shawbury, Henlow, Stafford, Kinloss and Brampton. Funeral arrangements in Huntingdon to be arranged. Please contact Tony Hardland, email: [tncharland@hotmail.com](mailto:tncharland@hotmail.com) for enquires about funeral arrangements.

**FLT** Lt John 'Flush' Conning, Bomber Command post-war Navigator of Narborough, Norfolk, passed away April 2025 aged 92. Called up for National Service, John remained in the RAF until his 55th birthday. He was nav plotter on a 49 Sqn Valiant during Op Grapple, the dropping of nuclear bombs over the Christmas island sea range in 1957. He always had a happy demeanor about him with a great sense of humour and a fine wit, he and late wife Marlene gave some fine parties in their home. 'Flush' because his initials included WC! Blue Skies, John. Alan Mudge & Lesley Hayward-Mudge, Pentney, Norfolk.



**John Conning**

### Seeking

**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](mailto:rogerparker1944@icloud.com) maybe for get together sometime in the future.

### Reunions

**309** Entry RAF Hereford C Flt 4 Sqn Cooks, April 1967-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](mailto:David.tibbett@ntlworld.com)

**45TH** Entry RAF Hereford Suppliers. 63rd Reunion June 27-28 at Barns Hotel, Cannock. Contact Dave Bell, Hull: 01482 377625.

**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. Contact Gerry Evans on: 01793-764236 or email: [gerry.e.54@btinternet.com](mailto: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](mailto:joalteas@btinternet.com). If you would like to join the Association as a Member, please visit our website: [www.omanrafveterans.org](http://www.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](mailto:mickjwoodhouse1946@gmail.com) or through: 103rd-entry.org.uk.

**28TH** entry RAF Cosford, June 1956 to November 1957. Trade Group 19. How many of us left? Contact: David Slough. [d.slough@outlook.com](mailto:d.slough@outlook.com)

### Associations

**THE** Southend Group of the National Service (Royal Air Force) Association holds its next Social Lunch on Wednesday June 25 at the Castle Hadleigh, Essex at 1pm. Guest speaker will be Wg Cdr (Ret'd) Neil Tomlin Area Director of the RAF Benevolent Fund. All RAF veterans and guests are welcome. For more details and bookings contact Area Organiser Ron Spack 01268 779697.

**591** SU Association. In its 72nd year of existence, 591 Signal Unit has established an Association (better late than never!). Its aim is to foster esprit de corps and comradeship, to promote and maintain the ethos and heritage of this incredible Signals Unit. Ex-members and currently serving ex members of 591 SU are invited to visit the Association's website at: [www.591suassociation.co.uk](http://www.591suassociation.co.uk) for membership details and news of the next annual reunion along with other upcoming events for 2025.

**WHAT** do you know about the 2 Halifax RAF Sqns 346 and 347 which flew from RAF Elvington near York in World War II? Why

not join the Sud-Ouest France Branch of RAFA to find out more? You will be welcomed with open arms or un Accueil Chaleureux! For further details contact Terry Dennett at [Admin@Rafsudouest.fr](mailto:Admin@Rafsudouest.fr) or call: 0033546953889

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

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

**SUAS** – have you been a member of Southampton University Air Squadron as a student or staff member? If so, please join our Facebook page, 'Southampton UAS Association' or email: [6FTS-SUASAdmin@mod.gov.uk](mailto:6FTS-SUASAdmin@mod.gov.uk) to join our association community.

**IF** you trained as an RAF

Administrative Apprentice (or you are related to one) we would be delighted to welcome you to the RAFAA Association. Please see: [rafadappassn.org](http://rafadappassn.org); or contact the Membership Secretary on: 07866 085834 or the Chairman on: 01933 443673.

**RAF** Catering Warrant Officers' and Seniors' Association: all serving or retired TG19 WO or FS and all former Catering Branch Officers are invited to join the RAF CWO&SA. We meet twice yearly with a vibrant gathering of retired and serving members. For more information send an email to: [janedjones6@btinternet.com](mailto:janedjones6@btinternet.com). The first year of membership is free.

**RAF** Physical Training Instructors Association holds an Annual Dinner and AGM over a weekend plus locally organised events. Please contact RAFPTIA Honorary Secretary Denise Street-Brown on: [ptisec@outlook.com](mailto:ptisec@outlook.com) for membership enquiries. To become a member of the Association you will have had to have successfully passed the RAF Physical Training Instructors Basic Training Course.

## Runnymede ceremony

**THE** ANNUAL ACT of Commemoration at Runnymede Memorial is on Sunday, May 18 at 11am.

Wreaths will be laid on behalf of the Commonwealth Air Forces and ex-Service organisations in honour of 29,263 members of the Commonwealth Air Forces

who lost their lives in the Second World War in 1939/45 while operating from the UK and North West Europe and who have no known grave.

This moving ceremony is open to all who wish to pay their respects to those named on the memorial.

## BoB memorial service

**EACH** YEAR the Royal Air Force commemorates the Battle of Britain and those who flew and fought in the air and on the ground, at a service in Westminster Abbey.

The RAF Ceremonial Office is seeking to improve its knowledge of this unique demographic and to offer places at the formal Battle of Britain Thanksgiving and Rededication Service.

This year's service is planned for Sunday, September 21, and in subsequent years.

We would very much like to hear from the widows, family descendants and any other family members of those who participated in the Battle. If you are a family member, or know someone who is, please write to: Mrs Michele

Small, Ceremonial Office, Bentley Priory Building, RAF Northolt, Ruislip, Middlesex, HA4 6NG, providing details of your relationship to your relative who served in the RAF between July and October 1940 and your email address and a contact phone number.

Additionally, for the purpose of allocating tickets, please also send your full name, home address, date and place of birth, and passport or driving licence number (at any time and without notice or justification the RAF reserves the right to void tickets and refuse entry to Westminster Abbey before or on the day).

This information is also required for any additional guests who wish to attend the Service with you – thank you.

### How to use our service

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

### Important Notice

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

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

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

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





## Your Announcements

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



**PEDAL POWER:** Cyclists at RAF Digby

PHOTO: MICHAEL POWELL, RAFBF

## Get on your bike for charity

THE RAF Benevolent Fund will hold its new Heritage Ride in Lincolnshire on September 27.

The event is a 40 or 100-mile cycle challenge taking place both virtually and physically across heritage sites in the county.

"The physical Heritage Ride will take place on Saturday, September 27, starting and finishing at RAF Digby.

"The virtual challenge will take place the weekend of September 27-28, allowing riders to participate in the event by completing the 40 or 100-mile distance anywhere in the world,"

said a spokesperson for the charity.

The heritage sites will include Wickenby Aerodrome, Scampton Church and the International Bomber Command Centre, as well as passing Woodhall Spa, RAF Fillingham Heritage Centre and RAF Waddington.

The theme for this year's ride is 'Your Heritage, Your Ride', encouraging participants to share their personal links to the RAF and inspiration behind their decision to support the RAF Family.

● Go to: [rafbf.org](http://rafbf.org) for more.

## Help author's dream come true

**SWISS HISTORIAN** Dimitri Viglietti is appealing for the families of World War II airmen killed when their Lancaster crashed in western Switzerland in March 1944 to contact him.

Dimitri has recently published a book, *Crash* (pictured below right), that recounts the crew's last hours.

The author said: "It's a story that's very close to my heart, having been told to me almost 55 years ago by my grandfather, who witnessed this crash. The book is written in French and translated into English because I want the surviving family members of this crew to know the story of their relatives' last three hours, and then what happened after the crash."

The book has received widespread coverage in the Swiss media and last month, during a visit to the RAF Club in London, Dimitri presented the title to Air Force attachés from five continents.

The six crew members of Lancaster JB474 from 57 Squadron, based at East Kirby,

**WRECKAGE:** Remains of Lancaster JB474 12 hours after the crash



who lost their lives when their aircraft was shot down while on an operation to Stuttgart, were: PO Samuel Atcheson, Sgt Brian Thomas, PO Antoine McCall, FS Jack Greenhalgh, Sgt Frank Tisserand and Sgt James Naylor. Also on board was FS Kenneth Reece, who was taken prisoner of war.

Dimitri said: "If the families can get in touch with me so that I can give them a copy of my book, it would be a dream come true that I've been waiting 20 years to fulfil."

● You can contact Dimitri via email: [dim.vig@bluewin.ch](mailto:dim.vig@bluewin.ch)



**ROYAL AIR FORCE**

## RAF News

The Forces Favourite Read

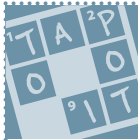
Hit your target market with **RAF News** - the official newspaper of the Royal Air Force since 1961.

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

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

**RAF News**  
The official voice of the Royal Air Force





Crossword

No. 385

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

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.



Su Doku

No. 395

Across

- 7. Suspend a right RAF building (6)
- 8. Tax attack (6)
- 10. RAF plane out for blood (7)
- 11. After 'Dynasty' duck dance (5)
- 12. Work bearings off the latch (4)
- 13. Instrument for 'Twelfth Night' heroine (5)
- 17. RAF insignia decomposed outside garage (5)
- 18. And 21 Down, 9 Down. Last of The Few (4,5,9)
- 22. During ceasefire, a dynamo completed (5)
- 23. Uncompromising 1980s pop star? (7)
- 24. Affleck's working at RAF station (6)
- 25. Love wild Madeira endlessly (6)

Down

- 1. Rank indicator (7)
- 2. Maybe see mine competitors (7)
- 3. Part of aircraft used to taxi in (5)
- 4. See 5 Down
- 5. And 4 Down. A twelfth rink designed by RAF legend (5,7)
- 6. Embracing the Spanish: my French fruit (5)
- 9. See 18 Across
- 14. Bundle of joy left on Euphrates city (7)
- 15. Following Julius Caesar, I moved to a foreign country (7)
- 16. One more on Earth, perhaps (7)
- 19. Study Penny's costume (5)
- 20. Where ghosts hang out (5)
- 21. See 18 Across

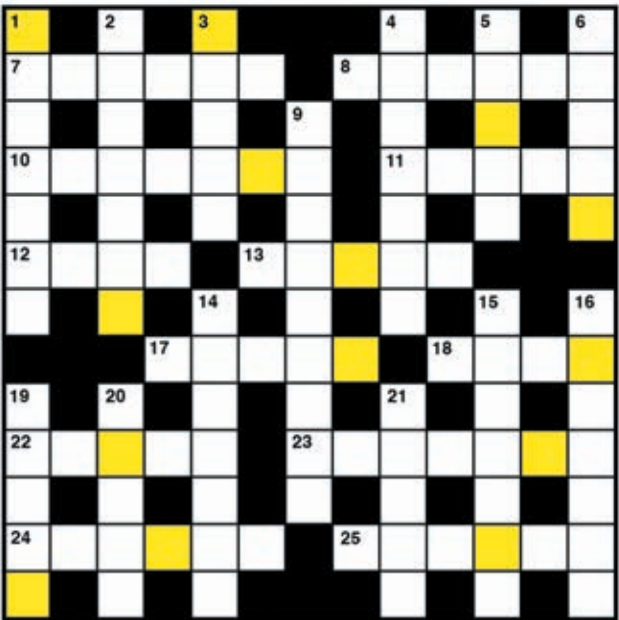
Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

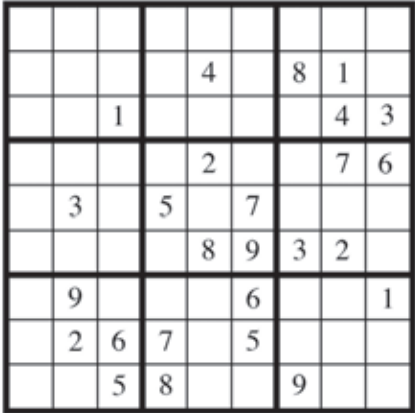
RAF activity: .....Crossword No. 385



Solution to Crossword No. 384

Across – 7. Editor 8. Danube 10. Flytrap 11. Right 12. Adam  
13. Argon 17. Pasta 18. Blue 22. Abyss 23. Opens Up 24. Tahiti 25. Aliens  
Down – 1. Red Flag 2. Lily Pad 3. Cobra 4. Warrior 5. Lunge 6. Perth  
9. Operation 14. Varsity 15. Clashed 16. Tempest 19. Haiti 20. Tyche 21. Cello  
RAF term – Protector

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. 394

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



Music

The Divine Comedy

Rainy Sunday Afternoon, out in September

Rainy days & Sundays for Hannon

A LOT has happened to Neil Hannon since the last studio album by his band The Divine Comedy, the top-five *Office Politics*, in 2019. Their entire back catalogue was remastered and rereleased in 2020, while a best of, *Charmed Life*, also went top five when it came out in 2022.

More recently, Hannon wrote all the original songs for the global blockbuster *Wonka*, starring Timothée Chalamet as the eponymous character created by Roald Dahl. The Official Charts Co. announced it as the UK's most popular film of 2024.

This September sees the release of the 13th and some say possibly best Divine Comedy album, *Rainy Sunday Afternoon*. Recorded at Abbey Road Studios, the album is written, arranged and produced by Hannon.

"My musical output is, for better or worse, a representation of my personality," he said. "A good

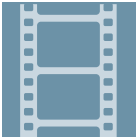


chunk of that personality revels in the rumbunctious; celebrates the silly. And I made ample use of that for the *Wonka* songs."

"I have, though, like everyone, a darker, more melancholy side. And for one reason or another it has been much in evidence of late. I needed to use this album as an outlet for those feelings. To work through some stuff. Mortality, memories, relationships, political and social upheaval. Everyone should get to make an orchestral pop album once in a while. It should be available on the NHS."

To celebrate the release of the album, The Divine Comedy will tour the UK this October – some dates are already sold out. EU and Irish dates will follow next year.

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



Film Review

The Thicket (15)

On digital now, on DVD 26 May

Lewis is so bad, it's good

IN THIS snow-dusted West Texas Western, a young boy hires a bounty hunter to rescue his kidnapped sister from a vicious outlaw gang.

When Jack (Levon Hawke) and his family come into the path of a small band of outlaws at a river crossing, a stand-off leads to their father being killed and his sister (Esmé Creed-Miles) being taken prisoner. The gang, it turns out, is led by the fearsome Cut Throat Bill: played with gleeful menace by Juliette Lewis, who seems to be having the time of her life.

Unfortunately, Jack is a bit of a wet blanket, lacking the grit or complexity to carry the story himself. Luckily for us, he seeks help from underestimated gunslinger Reginald Jones (Peter Dinklage) and his ex-slave partner Eustace Howard (Gbenga Akinnagbe). The real spice of *The Thicket* comes from the performances of white hat Dinklage and black hat Lewis. The quality of the film shoots up whenever either is on screen – but especially when they're sharing it. There's a whiff of *True Grit* in



LEWIS: Having a ball as Cut Throat Bill, who runs into gunslinger Reginald Jones (Peter Dinklage, below)

the setup – a child seeking vengeance through a reluctant hired gun – but it's Lewis who channels Jeff Bridges' Rooster Cogburn, delivering lines in a growl so gravelly it occasionally resembles a motorbike. And while it's funny, it works thanks to her full-throttle commitment.

Beyond the slight twist of having a woman as the big baddie and a hero with dwarfism, this is still a pretty



simple and familiar genre film. There are some solidly shot showdowns, but the story and characterisation feel a bit bare. Surprising, given it's adapted from a Joe R. Lansdale novel, but if there was richness in the source material, it hasn't entirely made the translation to screen.

*The Thicket* may be uneven, but it is elevated by a few strong performances.

3 out of 5 roundels Review by Sam Cooney